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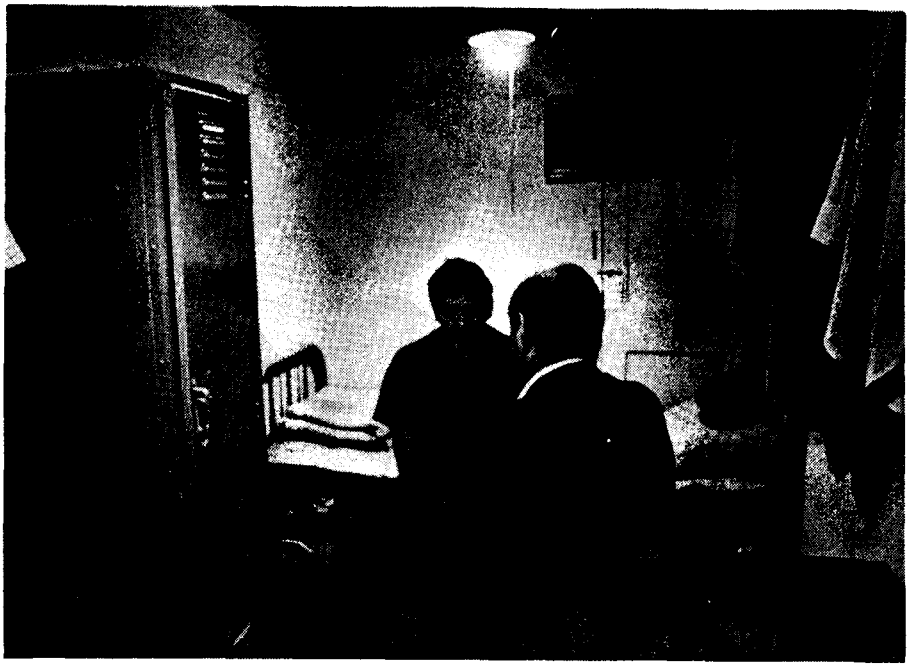

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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The Despairing Optimist . . . . . .

RENÉ DUBOS

The small numbers of Englishmen who founded the Virginia Company in 1607 and who landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620 have been followed by some forty-five million men, women and children who have come from all over the world to settle in the United States. I am one of these old-fashioned immigrants, one of the Europeans for whom the simple phrase "the New World" acted as a catalyst that made me cross the Atlantic because it conjured a land of absolute freedom and unlimited possibilities. I was twenty-three years old when I first landed in New York in October 1924—half a century ago. I had then no plan for the future, no job in view, not even a student visa, just the hope for adventure—any kind of adventure.

Although my life has long been completely identified with the American scene, intellectually and emotionally, I feel compelled at the end of these fifty years of residence to stand back and look at my adopted country as if I were a stranger—which obviously means that I am still somewhat of a stranger. I am even tempted now and then to engage in the game so popular among travelers and new settlers of defining what is American about America. But I shall limit myself to a few remarks concerning the urge that brought millions of people, including me, to the New World, and also concerning the differences that I still detect between Europe and the United States. More accurately, I shall take this half-century landmark as an excuse to speak about a few of my early American experiences.

I have often been asked, and ask myself even more often, why I left Europe with the definite intention of settling in the United States. While I cannot give a clear answer to this question, I know at least that my move was not motivated by the desire to escape from a hostile environment or from a difficult situation. I had received a fairly extensive and successful education in Paris and had worked happily for two years on the editorial staff of the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome. I loved the physical and human atmosphere of Western Europe and could have functioned in it successfully.

While growing up as a child in the French countryside, however, I had read with passion the *Aventures de Buffalo Bill,* which were then published as a weekly magazine; I could not imagine a more exciting life than roaming on horseback over the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. I was also a devotee of the stories about the American detectives Nick Carter and Nat Pinkerton; their feats in combating the criminal elements of American society had familiarized me with what I then imagined to be the downtown atmosphere of New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Later, in Paris and in Rome, I assimilated anything that came my way concerning the technologic and economic possibilities of North America. Although I had no clear idea of what these possibilities were, I was nevertheless eager to take my chance at them.

As I now realize, this distorted and fanci-

✪ RENÉ DUBOS's latest book is *Beast or Angel? Choices That Make Us Human.*

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ful introduction to American life was not peculiar to me. I participated unconsciously in the collective utopian dream of countless Europeans who imagined America as a land of complete liberty and material abundance, where people had been freed once and for all from the social shackles and economic restraints of a despotic, tired and depleted Europe. The New World had a more real existence in my reveries than on the map. When in October 1924 I boarded the old steamship *Rochambeau,* which took me in ten days from Le Havre to New York, I was not escaping from the Old World or searching for a new social philosophy, but simply attempting to convert into reality my daydream about the New World.

In ways that I could not have foreseen, chance has helped me to fulfill some of the expectations that motivated me to cross the Atlantic, but in a much more diversified way than I had imagined. To my chagrin, however, my acquaintance with the Rocky Mountains has been gained from trips by train, automobile and airplane, rather than from adventures on horseback. Although the greatest adventures of my American life have been sedate and sedentary, some of my most pleasurable memories are of the countless trips that have taken me repeatedly to each and every one of the fifty states and also over most of Canada.

In 1927, before moving from Rutgers University, where I had taken up graduate studies, to the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (now Rockefeller University), where I became a laboratory scientist, I had the chance to travel by train over most of North America, acting as interpreter for an International Congress of Soil Science organized to visit agricultural experiment stations and typical soil formations in the United States and Canada. My first overall view of the continent was therefore from a traditional pullman car. Ever since that time, the immensity of the continent has been registered in my mind as a kind of moving picture orchestrated with the lonely call of the American trains, clicking off the miles. In my mind, this call was not suited to crowded settlements—as is the call of the European trains—but to the solitudes of a wild continent.

The experience of this long railroad trip has helped me understand the peculiar satisfaction that many Americans find in being constantly on the move. There is in fact a biological basis to the appeal of migratory life. The Stone Age hunters followed the seasonal migrations of wild game, a practice that may be at the origin of the great dispersals of mankind during prehistory and history. The colonization of the whole of North America in less than three centuries constitutes the most recent example of massive movement of people. Since the "winning of the West" will probably be the last of the great dispersals of mankind that began out of Africa during the Old Stone Age, the concept of the "open road" may well turn out to be one of the most characteristic features of American history and perhaps its most romantic aspect.

In 1930, I spent the summer vacation driving from New York to the Northwest Pacific Coast. Crossing the continent on dusty or muddy corduroy roads in an old car was then a strenuous enterprise, but one that helped me to recapture my childhood imaginings and give them substance. The Far West was then only half-tamed, and I had no difficulty recognizing Buffalo Bill's holy hunting grounds in Nebraska and Wyoming; I could also worship at his grave on Lookout Mountain in Colorado. Along the Snake River Valley in Idaho, the rows of poplar trees and the greenness of the irrigated farmland reminded me of the French countryside, but the friendly casualness of the human contacts in crude eating places and primitive overnight cabins made me experience a way of life different from anything I had known in Europe, and in most cases quite congenial to me. From the Snake River, I proceeded to the Columbia River and eventually had my first glimpse of the Pacific Ocean from a high elevation among the huge trees of an evergreen forest. This was the completion of my personal discovery of America, and I have wished ever since that fate had made me settle somewhere on

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the Northwest Coast. The phrase "Oregon Trail" still has for me rich overtones of adventure and romance; it symbolizes experiences that go back to the great migrations through which mankind colonized the whole globe.

Like other French people of my generation, I began developing a global view of the earth in the 1920s while reading books such as Paul Morand's *Rien que la terre.* I am amused by the fact that, half a century later, I coauthored with Barbara Ward a book with a similar title, *Only One Earth,* prepared for the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. While the two books are of course very different, they both have in common the theme that in some respects the earth can and should be understood as a global village. On the other hand, I also believe, as I indicated in the preceding issue of the SCHOLAR, that we are now beginning to witness a revival of regionalism that will complement the global point of view.

While it is obvious that North America and Western Europe now share the same scientific technology and to a large extent the same economic and social problems, nevertheless I still perceive in the United States a vibration and a mood that makes the New World a social entity very different from the Old World. As Octavio Paz remarked, "The word American designates a man defined not by what he had done but by what he would do." Thomas Wolfe also expressed the view that America was to be known not so much for what it is as for what it would become: "The true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our land is yet to come." Despite what Peter Schrag writes in his recent book, *The End of the American Future,* I believe that the urge for adventure and an almost physiological need to initiate new projects are still powerful components of the American ethos. Moving constantly as I do now in the academic as well as the technological world, over the whole continent, I find everywhere immensely vigorous people far more interested in change than in stability, more concerned with processes than with products. This dynamic attitude creates a national spirit of place that transcends the regional spirits of which I wrote earlier.

The psychological attitude toward the landscape is one of the aspects of the national spirit of place by which the New World differs from the Old World. A sense of nostalgia is commonly the basis of psychological needs for a certain type of environment. Most normal human beings yearn to experience the environmental qualities they associate with a golden age or at least with a past they revere. For many Europeans and Asians this feeling of nostalgia is identified with antiquity and with the great historical periods, as revealed by the influence of classical styles in the design of buildings and parks, and even in the management of nature. Such historical influences are of course also detectable in American life, but environmental nostalgia in the United States turns especially to experiences derived from a more recent past.

The occupation of North America by Indians left few permanent structures and furthermore it had little impact on the ways of life of the white settlers. Consequently, the environmental nostalgia of Americans, especially of those descended from the early settlers who cleared the land, rarely goes further back than the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The heroic age of America cannot be antiquity or other classical periods as is the case for Europe or Asia, but the short period—a century ago—that saw the clearing of the primeval forest, the breaking of the prairie, the winning of the West. The memories of this adventurous and turbulent past probably explain the tendency in the United States to identify the word *nature* with wilderness, and the pervasive longing among many Americans for life in the wild.

In practice, the wilderness is now more a subject of conversation than of direct experience. There is little if any primeval forest or other forms of wilderness left east of the Rockies, and not much on the Pacific Coast. Except for earnest campers and

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forest rangers, few are the Americans who really come in direct contact with untamed nature. But their nostalgia for wilderness expresses itself in the way they manage nature. The people of France and Italy emphasize formal design in their private gardens as well as in public landscape architecture. English people cultivate in their parklands a picturesque seminatural atmosphere. In contrast, North Americans commonly assert that they prefer their nature to be rather wild; they like to maintain the rough and the unpruned even in their most humanized landscapes.

Qualitative differences between the Old World and the New World may have been produced even with regard to systems of transportation by the rapid spread of immigrants from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast. In Europe travel means chiefly going from a particular place to another, either to visit a scenic area or more commonly to see a famous building. In contrast, moving for the sake of moving became very early a widespread behavioral pattern in America. This trait probably has its origin in the fact that instead of settling more or less permanently on the land they had cleared, as was the case for the Old World peasantry, a large percentage of American people continued to move in search of better lands or places of business. From Walt Whitman's "The Open Road" to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road,* American literature has constantly given glamour to human restlessness—whether motivated by the desire to escape from sedentary life or by the search for new experiences.

The cultural conditioning for mobility certainly influenced the history and development of American railroads and highways. Much was being written in Europe a few decades ago about certain famous trains such as the Orient Express, the Trans-Siberian, the Flying Scotsman and the Blue Train, but the stories concerning them emphasized the romantic adventures or political intrigues taking place in the compartments rather than what could be seen of the countryside from the train windows. In contrast, the various American railroad companies operating between the Middle West and the Pacific Coast used to compete by advertising the scenic wonders along their routes. In our times, several of the most famous American highways seem to be designed not so much for convenience and speed of transportation as for making available to the traveler the most spectacular aspects of the landscape. The hobo riding the rails is a picturesque and typically American symbol of the desire to be on the move, regardless of the destination.

In America, travel is thus often an end in itself, a value for its own sake. But being constantly on the move, taking to the open road, has become more and more commonly a social form of escape. In *On the Road,* Kerouac expressed the beatnik's horror of taking roots anywhere for fear of having to accept the constraints of society. The line "Where are we going, man? I don't know but we gotta go" speaks to all those who wish to escape—and who does not want to escape from social constraints at certain moments of his life? This longing for motion is far different from the desire to travel as a tourist for the sake of experiencing a pleasant or new sensation. It is different also from the urge that motivated forty-five million people, including me, to migrate to the United States because they believed they were coming to the land of abundance and freedom.

In our times, boredom or economic reasons certainly motivate in part the enormous mobility of the American population, but this is not the whole story. As President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the Daughters of the American Revolution, "Remember, remember always, that all of us and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists." People of action and people with a purpose were probably at the origin of the American passion for travel, and for many of their decendants mobility is still associated with a sense of purpose and an eagerness for action. Benjamin Franklin also was taking an activist view toward social and geographical mobility when in 1784 he published both in

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French and in English from his private printing press near Paris, a pamphlet entitled "Information to those who would remove to America." In America, according to him, even poor people can "buy land sufficient to establish themselves" and artisans are always eager to receive apprentices and even to pay them while giving them training. "In America," Franklin told the Europeans with pride, "people do not inquire concerning a stranger, 'What is he?' but 'What can he do?' "

Speaking from my own experience as an old-fashioned immigrant, I believe that what Franklin wrote two centuries ago is still largely true today.

Jacob Bronowski

1908-1974

Member, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *Editorial Board, 1973-1974*

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Scholar's New Editor

John Hope Franklin, president of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, has announced the appointment of Joseph Epstein to the editorship of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Mr. Epstein, author, critic, and visiting lecturer in the Department of English at Northwestern University, was an associate editor of the *New Leader,* senior editor of *Encyclopedia Britannica,* and associate editor of Quadrangle Books. His book, *Divorced in America,* was published last June, and he is currently at work on a study of success in American life.

Mr. Epstein succeeds Hiram Haydn, who was editor from 1944 until his death in December 1973. Peter Gay, a member of the SCHOLAR's editorial board since 1971, has served as acting editor during the interim.

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Politics and the American Language

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

In our time, political speech and writing
are largely the defence of the indefensible.
—George Orwell

IT TAKES A CERTAIN FORTITUDE to pretend to amend Orwell on this subject. But "Politics and the English Language"—which I herewith incorporate by reference—was written more than a generation ago. In the years since, the process of semantic collapse has gathered speed, verified all of Orwell's expectations and added new apprehensions for a new age. Americans in particular have found this a painful period of self-recognition. In 1946 we comfortably supposed that Orwell was talking about other people—Nazis and Stalinists, bureaucrats and sociologists, Professor Lancelot Hogben and Professor Harold Laski. Now recent history has obliged us to extend his dispiriting analysis to ourselves.

Vietnam and Watergate: these horrors will trouble the rest of our lives. But they are not, I suppose, unmitigated horrors. "Every act rewards itself," said Emerson. As Vietnam instructed us, at terrible cost, in the limit of our wisdom and power in foreign affairs, so Watergate instructed us, at considerably less cost, in the limits of wisdom and power in the presidency. It reminded us of the urgent need to restore the original balance of the Constitution—the balance between presidential power and presidential accountability. In doing this, it has, among other things, brought back into public consciousness the great documents under which the American government was organized.

The Constitution, the debates of the Constitutional Convention, *The Federalist Papers*—how many of us read them with sus-

✪ "Politics and the American Language" is a revised and expanded version of an article that appeared in the September-October issue of *Today's Education,* the journal of the National Education Association.

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tained attention in earlier years? A few eccentrics like Justice Black and Senator Ervin pored over them with devotion. The rest of us regarded them, beyond an occasional invocation of the Bill of Rights or the Fourteenth Amendment, as documents of essentially historical interest and left them undisturbed on the shelf. Then, under the goad first of Vietnam and then of Watergate, legislators, editors, columnists, even political scientists and historians—everyone, it would seem, except for presidential lawyers—began turning the dusty pages in order to find out what Madison said in the convention about the war-making power or how Hamilton defined the grounds for impeachment in the sixty-fifth Federalist. Vietnam and Watergate are hardly to be compared. One is high tragedy, the other low, if black, comedy. But between them they have given the American people a spectacular reeducation in the fundamentals of our constitutional order.

One cannot doubt that this experience will have abiding political significance. The effect of Vietnam in exorcising our illusions and chastening our ambitions in foreign affairs has long been manifest. Now we begin to see the effect of Watergate in raising the standards of our politics. But I am less concerned initially with the political than with the literary consequences of this return to our constitutional womb. For, in addition to their exceptional qualities of insight and judgment, the historic documents must impress us by the extraordinary distinction of their language.

This was the age of the Enlightenment in America. The cooling breeze of reason tempered the hot work of composition and argument. The result was the language of the Founding Fathers—lucid, measured and felicitous prose, marked by Augustan virtues of harmony, balance and elegance. People not only wrote this noble language. They also read it. The essays in defense of the Constitution signed Publius appeared week after week in the New York press during the winter of 1787-88; and the demand was so great that the first thirty-six Federalist papers were published in book form while the rest were still coming out in the papers. One can only marvel at the sophistication of an audience that consumed and relished pieces so closely reasoned, so thoughtful and analytical. To compare *The Federalist Papers* with their equiva-

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lents in the press of our own day—say, with the contributions to the Op Ed page of the *New York Times*—is to annotate the decay of political discourse in America.

No doubt the birth of a nation is a stimulus to lofty utterance. The Founding Fathers had a profound conviction of historical responsibility. "The people of this country, by their conduct and example," Madison wrote in *The Federalist,* "will decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force." The substitution of reflection and choice for accident and force proposed a revolution in the history of government; and the authors of *The Federalist* were passionate exemplars of the politics of reason.

The Founding Fathers lived, moreover, in an age when politicians could say in public more or less what they believed in private. If their view of human nature was realistic rather than sentimental, they were not obliged to pretend otherwise. *The Federalist,* for example, is a work notably free of false notes. It must not be supposed, however, that even this great generation was immune to temptation. When the Founding Fathers turned to speak of and to the largest interest in a primarily agricultural nation, they changed their tone and relaxed their standards. Those who lived on the soil, Jefferson could inanely write, were "the chosen people of God . . . whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue." Such lapses from realism defined one of the problems of American political discourse. For, as society grew more diversified, new interests claimed their place in the sun; and each in time had to be courted and flattered as the Jeffersonians had courted and flattered the agriculturists. The desire for success at the polls thus sentimentalized and cheapened the language of politics.

And politics was only an aspect of a deeper problem. Society as a whole was taking forms that warred against clarity of thought and integrity of language. "A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it," said Emerson, "depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth,

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and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise . . . words are perverted to stand for things which are not."

"The prevalence of secondary desires," the desire of riches, pleasure, power and praise—this growing social complexity began to divert the function of words from expression to gratification. No one observed the impact of a mobile and egalitarian society on language more acutely than Tocqueville. Democracy, he argued, inculcated a positive preference for ambiguity and a dangerous addiction to the inflated style. "An abstract term," Tocqueville wrote, "is like a box with a false bottom; you may put in what you please, and take them out again without being observed." So words, divorced from objects, became instruments less of communication than of deception. Unscrupulous orators stood abstractions on their head and transmuted them into their opposites, aiming to please one faction by the sound and the contending faction by the meaning. They did not always succeed. "The word *liberty* in the mouth of Webster," Emerson wrote with contempt after the Compromise of 1850, "sounds like the word *love* in the mouth of a courtezan." Watching Henry Kissinger babbling about his honor at his famous Salzburg press conference, one was irresistibly reminded of another of Emerson's nonchalant observations: "The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons."

Other developments hastened the spreading dissociation of words from meaning, of language from reality. The rise of mass communications, the growth of large organizations and novel technologies, the invention of advertising and public relations, the professionalization of education—all contributed to linguistic pollution, upsetting the ecological balance between words and their environment. In our own time the purity of language is under unrelenting attack from every side—from professors as well as from politicians, from newspapermen as well as from advertising men, from men of the cloth as well as from men of the sword, and not

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least from those indulgent compilers of modern dictionaries who propound the suicidal thesis that all usages are equal and all correct.

A living language can never be stabilized, but a serious language can never cut words altogether adrift from meanings. The alchemy that changes words into their opposites has never had more adept practitioners than it has today. We used to object when the Communists described dictatorships as "people's democracies" or North Korean aggression as the act of a "peace-loving" nation. But we are no slouches ourselves in the art of verbal metamorphosis. There was often not much that was "free" about many of the states that made up what we used to call, sometimes with capital letters, the Free World; as there is, alas, very often little that is gay about many of those who seek these days to kidnap that sparkling word for specialized use. Social fluidity, moral pretension, political and literary demagoguery, corporate and academic bureaucratization and a false conception of democracy are leading us into semantic chaos. We owe to Vietnam and Watergate a belated recognition of the fact that we are in linguistic as well as political crisis and that the two may be organically connected. As Emerson said, "We infer the spirit of the nation in great measure from the language."

For words are not neutral instruments, pulled indifferently out of a jumbled tool kit. "Language," wrote Coleridge, "is the armoury of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests." Language colors and penetrates the depths of our consciousness. It is the medium that dominates perceptions, organizes categories of thought, shapes the development of ideas and incorporates a philosophy of existence. Every political movement generates its own language-field; every language-field legitimizes one set of motives, values and ideals and banishes the rest. The language-field of the Founding Fathers directed the American consciousness toward one constellation of standards and purposes. The language-field of Vietnam and Watergate has tried to direct the national consciousness toward very different goals. Politics in basic aspects is a symbolic and therefore a linguistic phenomenon.

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We began to realize this in the days of the Indochina War. In the middle 1960s Americans found themselves systematically staving off reality by allowing a horrid military-bureaucratic patois to protect our sensibilities from the ghastly things we were doing in Indochina. The official patter about "attrition," "pacification," "defoliation," "body counts," "progressive squeeze-and-talk," sterilized the frightful reality of napalm and My Lai. This was the period when television began to provide a sharper access to reality, and Marshall McLuhan had his day in court.

But the military-bureaucratic jargon could be blamed on generals, who, as General Eisenhower reminded us at every press conference, habitually speak in a dialect of their own. What we had not perhaps fully realized before Watergate was the utter debasement of language in the mouths of our recent civilian leaders. How our leaders really talk is not, of course, easy to discover, since their public appearances are often veiled behind speeches written by others. I know that President Kennedy spoke lucidly, wittily and economically in private. President Johnson spoke with force and often in pungent and inventive frontier idiom. President Nixon's fascinating contribution to oral history suggests, however, a recent and marked decline in the quality of presidential table talk. "A man cannot speak," said Emerson, "but he judges himself."

Groping to describe that degenerate mélange of military, public relations and locker-room jargon spoken in the Nixon White House, Richard N. Goodwin aptly wrote of "the bureaucratization of the criminal class." It was as if the Godfather spoke in the phrases of the secretary of health, education and welfare. When one read of "stroking sessions," of "running out of the bottom line," of "toughing it out," of going down "the hang-out road," or "how do you handle that PR-wise," one felt that there should be one more impeachable offense; and that is verbicide. But what was worse than the massacre of language, which after all displayed a certain low ingenuity, was the manipulation of meaning. The presidential speech preceding the release of the expurgated transcripts was syntactically correct enough. But it proclaimed in tones of ringing sincerity that the transcripts showed exactly the opposite of what in fact the transcripts did show. "He unveils a swamp,"

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as the *New Yorker* well put it, "and instructs us to see a garden of flowers." In the Nixon White House, language not only fled the reality principle but became the servant of nightmare.

"The use of words," wrote Madison in the thirty-seventh *Federalist*, "is to express ideas. Perspicuity, therefore, requires not only that the ideas should be distinctly formed, but that they should be expressed by words distinctly and exclusively appropriate to them." Madison was under no illusion that this condition of semantic beatitude was easy to attain. "No language is so copious," he continued, "as to supply words and phrases for every complex idea, or so correct as not to include many equivocally denoting different ideas. . . . When the Almighty himself condescends to address mankind in their own language, his meaning, luminous as it must be, is rendered dim and doubtful by the cloudy medium through which it is communicated." Nevertheless, Madison and his generation thought the quest for precision worth the effort. It is an entertaining but morbid speculation to wonder what the Founding Fathers, returning to inspect the Republic on the eve of the two-hundredth anniversary of the independence they fought so hard to achieve, would make of the White House tapes.

The degradation of political discourse in America is bound to raise a disturbing question. May it be, as Tocqueville seemed to think, that such deterioration is inherent in democracy? Does the compulsion to win riches, pleasure, power and praise in a fluid and competitive society make the perversion of meaning and the debasement of language inevitable? One can certainly see specific American and democratic traits that have promoted linguistic decay. But a moment's reflection suggests that the process is by no means confined to the United States nor to democracies. Language degenerates a good deal more rapidly and thoroughly in communist and fascist states. For the control of language is a necessary step toward the control of minds, as Orwell made so brilliantly clear in *1984*. Nowhere is meaning more ruthlessly manipulated, nowhere is language more stereotyped, mechanical, implacably banal and systematically false, nowhere is it more purged of personal nuance and human inflection, than in Russia and China. In democracies the assault on language is piecemeal,

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sporadic and unorganized. And democracy has above all the decisive advantage that the preservation of intellectual freedom creates the opportunity for counterattack. Democracy always has the chance to redeem its language. This may be an essential step toward the redemption of its politics.

One must add that it is idle to expect perfection in political discourse. The problem of politics in a democracy is to win broad consent for measures of national policy. The winning of consent often requires the bringing together of disparate groups with diverging interests. This inescapably involves a certain oracularity of expression. One remembers de Gaulle before the crowd in Algeria, when the *pieds-noirs* chanted that Algeria belonged to France, replying solemnly, "Je vous comprends, mes camarades"—hardly a forthright expression of his determination to set Algeria free. Besides, oracularity may often be justified since no one can be all that sure about the future. The Founding Fathers understood this, which is why the Constitution is in many respects a document of calculated omission and masterful ambiguity whose "real" meaning—that is, what it would mean in practice—only practice could disclose. Moreover, as Lord Keynes, who wrote even economics in English, once put it, "Words ought to be a little wild, for they are an assault of thought upon the unthinking."

Keynes immediately added, however: "But when the seats of power and authority have been attained, there should be no more poetic license." Madison described the American experiment as the replacement of accident and force by reflection and choice in the processes of government. The responsibility of presidents is to define real choices and explain soberly why one course is to be preferred to another—and, in doing so, to make language a means not of deception but of communication, not an enemy but a friend of the reality principle.

Yet presidents cannot easily rise above the society they serve and lead. If we are to restore the relationship between words and meaning, we must begin to clean up the whole linguistic environment. This does not mean a crusade for standard English or a campaign to resurrect the stately rhythms of *The Federalist Papers*. Little could be more quixotic than an attempt to hold a rich and

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flexible language like American English to the forms and definitions of a specific time, class, or race. But some neologisms are better than others, and here one can demand, particularly in influential places, a modicum of discrimination. More important is that words, whether new or old, regain a relationship to reality. Vietnam and Watergate have given a good many Americans, I believe, a real hatred of double-talk and a hunger for bluntness and candor. Why else the success of the posthumous publication of President Truman's gaudy exercise in plain speaking?

The time is ripe to sweep the language-field of American politics. In this season of semantic malnutrition, who is not grateful for a public voice that appears to blurt out what the speaker honestly believes? A George Wallace begins to win support even among blacks (though ambition is already making Wallace bland, and blandness will do him in too). Here those who live by the word —I mean by the true word, like writers and teachers; not by the phony word, like public relations men, writers and teachers— have their peculiar obligation. Every citizen is free under the First Amendment to use and abuse the words that bob around in the swamp of his mind. But writers and teachers have, if anyone has, the custodianship of the language. Their charge is to protect the words by which they live. Their duty is to expel the cant of the age.

At the same time, they must not forget that in the recent past they have been among the worst offenders. They must take scrupulous care that indignation does not lead them to the same falsity and hyperbole they righteously condemn in others. A compilation of political pronouncements by eminent writers and learned savants over the last generation would make a dismal volume. One has only to recall the renowned, if addled, scholars who signed the full page advertisement in the *New York Times* of October 15, 1972, which read, as the *New Yorker* would say, in its entirety: "Of the two major candidates for the Presidency of the United States, we believe that Richard Nixon has demonstrated the superior capacity for prudent and responsible leadership. Consequently, we intend to vote for President Nixon on November 7th and we urge our fellow citizens to do the same."

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The time has come for writers and teachers to meet the standards they would enforce on others and rally to the defense of the word. They must expose the attack on meaning and discrimination in language as an attack on reason in discourse. It is this rejection of reason itself that underlies the indulgence of imprecision, the apotheosis of usage and the infatuation with rhetoric. For once words lose a stable connection with things, we can no longer know what we think or communicate what we believe.

One does not suggest that the restoration of language is all that easy in an age when new issues, complexities and ambiguities stretch old forms to the breaking point.

> . . . Words strain
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

Each venture is therefore the new beginning, the raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating in the general mess of imprecision of feeling. Yet, as Eliot went on to say, "For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business." As we struggle to recover what has been lost ("and found and lost again and again"), as we try our own sense of words against the decay of language, writers and teachers make the best contribution they can to the redemption of politics. Let intellectuals never forget that all they that take the word shall perish with the word. "Wise men pierce this rotten diction," said Emerson, "and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it, is a man in alliance with truth and God."

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Children's Stories

PETER COOLEY

The wolf bares fangs around a kid
on p. 3 tonight in that book holding
the attic still above my head. I'm home.
To my father's drone squaring the ceiling
(It's in a green box, near the bottom)
& April breaking here at "murder city,"
Detroit, whose suburbs swell ought to be fenced,
my father says, & wire-barbed to keep them,
the teen gangs, hoodlums, Southerners'
kids ("white and colored, I'm not prejudiced")
out, who steals his neighbors blind. On shrubs
holding whites of eyes buds break the dark
over this lawn Dad keeps out at an arm's length
lifting a switch. He lifts; an oasis rises,
lit like noon. "Well, time for bed." I nod.
My daughters sleep behind these walls & just today
I saw the wolf's jaws never close
at the plaza buying my six year old
her own. Something else I caught too late.

✪ PETER COOLEY's poems have appeared recently in *Harper's, Esquire* and the anthology *New Voices in American Poetry*. He is poetry editor of *North American Review*.

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Jockey

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

Money talks, but Jack your twenty bucks
won't make my horses talk.
You take me for another two-bit tout
who haunts the stables shifty eyed
looking for high priced nags that run outclassed?
I'll drink with you, but keep that roll in your pants.
Read the scratch sheets
and play some handicapper's tip
Or if you've got the heart
blow the whole wad on a long shot and be done.

Straight Bourbon. You are a gentleman.
You look me in the eye. And yet you see this
hump that bends my body like an overloaded branch:
it didn't come from pitching hay
or shoveling dung from the paddock to the barn.
This back-pack started as a jockey's crouch
to hide from the wind that fights your stride.
I was light but hugged my horse's sides
between my legs like a vise,
broke fast and rode hard for the rails,
had my share of the winners but loved them all.
I was the horse's mind, he was my heart.

Then I rode a doctored bay at Pimlico
some millionaire had high nerved for a race,

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deadened her leg so she'd run free of the pain.
Well she ran like a champ until the foreleg snapped
in the backstretch with the grandstand thundering, I went down
under the hooves of those nags she'd left behind.
One beat my shoulder like a gob of dough
and it began to rise.

So the stable was through with me,
the horse-faced women who take the jockey to bed
for a tip and a hard ride,
and tall jades that long to mother a boy-sized man.

Yet I rode for love of the horses, maybe
I'm worth more to them from the ground
than I ever was from their backs.
You know you're betting on a field of cripples
that should be scratched and set to graze?
Look how that roan bolts and halts when he's walked:
he's run his race in the paddock.
That grey has grown boxing-glove ankles.
I've had him stand
all afternoon in a tub of ice to shrink them down.
Another horse runs so doped with azium
he'll run in a dream
and win or lose in a dream.

So you take me for a hunchback fool
because I still won't take you for your money.
Well then lay it on the line.
The measure of a man is the speed
his dream races through the world. You bet

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dead money because your life isn't gamble enough.
See that chestnut mare in the ring—
no daisycutter, she has a great heart to ride;
when she gallops it's a song and you feel
steel springs under you, standing at the rail.
I rode her mother fifteen years ago,
a bright bay dream of sixteen hands,
Cloudland by Wrack out of Fairy Ray by Radium.

✪ DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN is a young poet whose recently published collection of poetry is titled *No Vacancies in Hell.* He is currently scheduling a reading tour for the academic year 1974-75.

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Oxford in the Seventies

RICHARD ELLMANN

JUST WHY I ACCEPTED A CHAIR IN ENGLISH LITERATURE at Oxford in 1970 is a matter I can hardly expect my unconscious mind to confide in my conscious one. That Oxford is, as Oscar Wilde declared with alumnal fervor, "the most beautiful thing in England," played its part. The notion of trumping middle age by a violent and unpredicted decomposition of place was also agreeable. The absence of economic reward—the presence, rather, of economic loss—contributed a pleasant air of self-sacrifice to what was perhaps only self-indulgence. Quixotic acts appeal to those of Quixote's age. At any rate, I was not alone, for just before or just after I came up to Oxford (one goes down *from* it, as from an alp), other Americans accepted posts in jurisprudence, medicine, symbolic logic, psychology, musicology, and—last year—in American literature. But in 1970 it still seemed beguilingly eccentric to teach English literature to the English, and so did the thought of succeeding to at least one of the titles of Lord David Cecil. More grandly, there was the precedent of John Dryden, who like most English poets before this century was a Cambridge man, but had been won away by the production of his plays in Oxford. As he said, a little ungraciously for his mother university,

> Thebes did his green unknowing youth engage;
> He chooses Athens for his riper age.

But I will not snub the several institutions, Athenian too, that were good enough to shelter me before Oxford.

The particular Hellenes among whom I was to sit at Oxford

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were the fellows of New College. There are about forty of them, but W. H. Auden did not have them in mind when he spoke of Ali Baba College and then explained, to a baffled audience, "It has forty fellows." Our Warden or head is Sir William Hayter, an able and gracious man who was once British ambassador to Moscow; many of the others are also well known, and the standard is high. Since at lunchtime they sit at a long table in the order of arrival, they rarely converse about their specialties. About half a dozen are professors, a title that is allotted more stingily in England and so is more honorific than in the United States.

The position of professors in colleges is, however, a little equivocal. They do not share in the work of admitting undergraduates, nor do they tutor them, so the principal business of the colleges—and the colleges are the principal parts of Oxford—goes on without them. A professor is obligated to do research in his subject, and to provide thirty-six hours of instruction a year, of which twenty-eight are to be lectures and the rest, if he so wishes, classes or seminars. Since students do not have to attend the lectures, and are not examined upon their content, they are easily lost as auditors. A series on American foreign policy is likely to go unheard, though Chomsky on linguistics will pack them in. If the lecturer is dull, he may be embarrassed by the small size of his audience; on the other hand, mere showmanship is not in favor.

A professor must also supervise an unspecified number of graduate students, who are either writing theses for a bachelor of arts or a doctor of philosophy degree or are being guided to a degree resembling an American master's degree, though harder to get—the bachelor of philosophy. Other than these duties, he must satisfy certain other conditions. For example, he must live within ten miles of Carfax, as the crossroads at the city center is called. My colleague, Dame Helen Gardner, who is not easily refused, was able to put pressure upon the university authorities to make a house available for me in St. Giles', which is within a few hundred yards of Carfax. Except during the St. Giles' fair, which goes on in early September, this beautiful street is quite habitable in spite of its traffic. I am required to be in residence during six of the eight weeks of Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity terms. The academic

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year at Oxford and Cambridge is shorter than at the red-brick universities.

A situation so favorable to scholarship excites some irritation inside college walls. Other fellows, harder worked, tend to look quizzically at their professorial colleagues, and have been known to disregard altogether their views at college meetings. In one or two colleges professors are made to pay for the room they occupy, as if to compensate the employer for the privilege of working on his premises. In my own college a great issue arose about fifteen years ago, when it was proposed that professors, alone among the fellows, should pay for their lunches. At that time the professor of physics happened to be an American and a Nobel prizewinner, Willis Lamb. He argued strongly against this oppressive treatment. But the then Warden indicated that he thought the imposition of charges was reasonable, and it appeared certain that the motion would carry. At this point Professor Lamb announced, as if casually, "In that case, I shall appeal to the Visitor." Such a threat had not been heard in college halls for perhaps a century. A Visitor is something that every Oxford college has, and nominally the Visitor, like a board of regents, has complete control of the college. But in practice no Visitor would dream of asserting his prerogative. In the case of New College, the threat was especially idle, for the Visitor is always the Bishop of Winchester, and the incumbent was a man who knew better than to interfere.

Still—and this is where Oxford is Oxford—the threat worked. The fellows foresaw embarrassment, and were delicate about outraging a distinguished colleague by driving him to an extreme, even if ineffectual, recourse. Then, too, if the professors are of little use to the college, they are generally innocuous, and sometimes decorative. So professors were allowed their free lunches too, and very good lunches they still are. Oxford food may well be the best institutional cuisine in the world. W. B. Yeats once remarked, in the midst of some lavish entertainment, to the Warden of Wadham College, Sir Maurice Bowra, "No emperor does himself so well as an Oxford don." Economy drives have not invalidated this statement altogether. A college dinner, at its grandest, is a moveable feast that takes place in four rooms, beginning

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with preprandial drinking, going on to a many-coursed meal at high table in hall, then to a smaller room for dessert, meaning fruit, nuts, snuff, port and brandy, and then to the senior common room for coffee and other drinks. Judicious purchases of wines have gone on for many years, so that it is not unusual to be served rare vintages from the cellar. Regular diners attest the quality of the fare by the monastic roundness of their bellies.

I too have dreamed of appealing to the Visitor, but one must choose one's occasion carefully, and none has arisen. Issues are usually resolved at college meetings to mutual agreement. They cover a variety of problems, including the management of the college endowment and lands, the treatment of students and staff, the election of new fellows. Although committees make preliminary reports, no issue is too small for general discussion—so the meetings can be tedious. But however tedious, they are well attended, and the Stated General Meetings, which occur once a term, can be shirked only on payment of a fine of ten pounds.

As a fellow, I am one of the owners of the college, empowered to vote on all such questions. I can also bask in its extraordinary antiquity. New College belies its name by being one of the oldest of Oxford colleges, as Pont Neuf was once the oldest of Paris bridges. It retains with some adaptations the original college buildings which, in 1380, our founder William of Wykeham caused to be erected. That 1980 will be exactly six hundred years from the founding date is a point not lost upon present members of the college, who plan a commensurate celebration. William of Wykeham needed a large plot of ground, and lugubriously the Great Plague and its ravages enabled him to buy up a good deal of property adjacent to the city wall. This wall, on which my own raw Victorian room looks out, may antedate the Conquest. By 1380 it was already an antiquity, and the city fathers specified that if they conceded William the right to build into and beyond it, he must in return maintain it. Accordingly, every two years the Lord Mayor of Oxford makes a formal visit to the college to verify that William's promise has been kept by his descendants. The custom fell into desuetude, but was revived by some antiquarian whim in this century. On the last occasion, which I attended, the Lord

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Mayor, a man of bulk and in full regalia, scaled the ramparts nimbly, and we all felt obliged to follow suit. He subjected the wall and its arrow slits to rigorous scrutiny before pronouncing himself satisfied with its defensive readiness. It is a fine wall. Outside it, in the slipe (which, to everyone's linguistic pleasure, is the area outside a city wall), is a place to park one's car, no small thing in the center of Oxford, and there also is a set of buildings put up in the nineteenth century and a college library erected in the 1930s.

William of Wykeham was not only Bishop of Winchester in the time of Chaucer, but also Lord Chancellor, a post he held first under Edward III in two stages, separated by a period of disgrace, and then under Richard II. To serve two monarchs so signally argues dexterity as well as competence. But he was also a genuine educator, *avant la lettre*. He formed a plan that was practical enough: it was to superintend the education of young men before and during their studies at Oxford. For this purpose he built Winchester College in his cathedral city, and in Oxford what he named the College of Saint Mary of Winchester. This was promptly and officially nicknamed New College. Not altogether self-effacing, William had himself sculptured, kneeling to the Virgin, in three places on the college walls. He intended that a boy, once admitted to Winchester, should look forward confidently to an Oxford degree. Wykehamists, as the old boys of Winchester were called, proceeded inevitably to New College, and no university interference was tolerated with the college's right to confer degrees upon whomever it chose. Other colleges might accept university-wide examinations, but New College refused to do so for several hundred years. Then early in the nineteenth century, a Royal Commission overrode all delays and evasions and forced capitulation. New College agreed to have its students examined like all others, on condition that a vestige of its ancient right be preserved in a form of words. So at the encaenia or commencement, when those from all other colleges meekly "supplicate" for degrees, New College members *demand* theirs.

So far all students at New College have been male. But the issue of coeducation, or, as it is called here (because Oxford was

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coeducational before Harvard embraced Radcliffe), coresidence, has been a central one during the last five years. The weakening of male authority has occurred more slowly in Britain generally than in the United States. It is still a country of male clubs, stag dinners, and husbands making out their wives' income tax forms. At Oxford five women's colleges have grown up in the last hundred years, but there are twenty-eight men's colleges with much larger enrollment. The sanctity of the male common room goes back to the celibacy of early Oxford, when all "clerks of Oxenford" took orders. It was only in the 1870s that dons were permitted to marry, and wives are still discouraged from attending functions at which friends and mistresses are welcome. The word "wife" causes a slight shudder when pronounced in college.

The cause of coresidence has not, as might have been expected, won immediate or total support from Oxford women. It is not that their "backs ache for the lash." Rather, the women's colleges have been islands of independence in a male sea. Like Smith and Wellesley in the United States, they are not eager to surrender this advantage. The arguments are both organizational and sexual. Women can assert more influence if they are joined together. There are more jobs for them. Propinquity to men, if nocturnal as well as diurnal, deprives women of the possibility of choosing to avoid immersion in sexual experience. Against these arguments is one that has gradually prevailed, that women's colleges cannot possibly now admit enough of the admirable women applicants. There seems no possibility of financing any new women's colleges. After much dragging of feet, therefore, the women's colleges have been brought to agree that during the next five years a hundred women a year may be admitted to colleges once exclusively male. In return, they have been assured that this number will not be exceeded until at least 1979, by which time the question will have been reconsidered.

With this encouragement, most of the men's colleges voted, or at least discussed voting, on coresidence. Only five could muster the two-thirds majority necessary to change college statutes. Their votes had to be ratified by the Privy Council, a process that took about a year. The first hundred women students, five thin bands of

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twenty each, will brave the austerities of once-male colleges this fall for the first time.

My own college debated the issue of coresidence furiously and at length. Male exclusiveness is not philosophically in vogue, so the argument was one of feasibility rather than of principle. Being aware of the ease with which the transition had been made at Princeton and at Yale, I quoted (though prudently without acknowledgment) my wife's remark, "Install two Kotex machines and you're in business." At the end, we were two votes short of the necessary two-thirds majority for coresidence. But the issue is not totally dormant. In the course of parliamentary maneuvers, the college statutes were changed to remove the word "male" in most places. So we have been enabled to elect our first woman fellow, who happens to be in English literature. She will take up residence in the fall, and perhaps when the issue of student coresidence is under discussion once again in four years' time, the college will accede to it without a quiver.

The problem of the sexes at Oxford has had a curious effect upon student organization. Both men and women feel that their opportunities to meet have been scarcer than they should be. The fact that each college sponsors its own social activities has not alleviated this feeling. As a result, there has lately been agitation for a student union building, which would provide both a place to meet and a means of taking a more concerted part in university affairs. During the four years I have been at Oxford, this project has excited the only substantial student protest. Oxford avoided, except for one sit-in, the great student troubles of the 1960s, but this year a second sit-in occurred. Two groups, of about fifty students in all, entered an administration building called the Indian Institute shortly after 9 a.m. on February 13. They ran in through the front doors and sealed them and a door leading outside from the basement. The administrative staff were told to leave, but ignored this "invitation or order." Some succeeded in locking themselves into their rooms, and the students were too polite to break down the doors. In one such room, locked before they could get into it, a secretary suggested to university officials who were clustering uncertainly outside that they enter through her window.

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This they did, at 11:15, with the registrar, who is the university's senior administrative official, in the lead. The students afterwards contended that the attacking force was made up of "hired thugs," by which they may have meant the four or five not very fearsome bulldogs who always accompany the proctors. But the registrar described the rescue party, rather more accurately, as made up of "elderly gentlemen" like himself. At any rate, they were briefly blocked by the students inside, but, in about half an hour, had jostled the students out. It was admitted that the students had been singularly well behaved, committing no violence or damage. Nonetheless, they were tried by a faculty court, and after turbulent proceedings were sent down for a year. This punishment seemed to me rather harsh, since students at Harvard, for comparable or worse activities, had had their exclusions suspended on condition of good behavior. In Oxford the students appealed the verdict to a specially constituted court, but it was sustained.

Whatever sympathy one feels for the project of a student union building, it is inextricably bound up with a considerable capital outlay, of a sort which is at present not possible in England. The government has had to forbid university building except in emergencies. Lack of money would also curb activities within such a building even if it could be constructed. At present, the government pays a social fee for each student to his or her college. If this money were to be deflected from the colleges, their social activities would break down, and the college system itself would be at risk. Most of the students would be reluctant to give up altogether the pleasures of college life. Though they plan to renew their demands in the fall, they appear to be bogging down in the general malaise of the economy.

Oxford, with all its antiquity, is not the same. "How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!" Matthew Arnold wrote in 1866, and the process continues. The one new college that has recently been built, by private benefaction, is Wolfson College, and this, under Sir Isaiah Berlin's enlightened leadership, is totally mixed as to sexes; fellows may bring their wives or husbands or other guests of either sex when they like. All Souls College remains a citadel of male supremacy, but in two or three years a new Warden may see

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this matter differently. Although Oxford still has the reputation of being upper class, it takes more and more of its students from government high schools as opposed to private ones. Much pomp is preserved but not all: though lecturers still wear gowns, their auditors do not. In the long vacation hallowed halls are happily made available for rough-and-tumble American summer schools to reduce the financial burden of maintenance. Even the dialect is changing, for students who come down from Yorkshire or other places no longer feel they must acquire an Oxford accent to escape being ostracized.

Predictions are heard that Oxford will not survive since neither Wilson nor Heath, both Oxford men, will be able to accord to Oxford, let alone to Cambridge, the special privileges and favor that they have enjoyed. Still, Oxford may prove as tenacious as it is beautiful. Anyone supposing that quiet and refinement are its only, or even its main, qualities, will be surprised to discover that the university has fangs. Matthew Arnold was sentimental when he spoke of its (or rather, her) dreaming spires, and celebrated Oxford as the home of lost causes. Ancient ceremony is kept up, not so much out of anachronism as for the sake of the game; but the men and women who engage in it are often insurgent in their politics, radical in their learned specialties. Judgments are rendered on people, on ideas, with unexpected severity and rigor. Because of these qualities, rather than because of its quaint leftovers of the past, Oxford continues to influence life in England and to produce leaders and poets. It is a good deal tougher than it looks.

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Legitimized Aggression and the Assignment of Evil

KARL E. SCHEIBE

If the war didn't happen to kill you it
was bound to start you thinking.
—George Orwell

WAR IS STILL A PARADOX TO PSYCHOLOGY. Psychological accounts of this spectacular and particularly human form of aggression have mostly been exercises in instinct naming, in the manner of Freud, or else attempts at explanation in terms of abstract social structure, in the sociological tradition. The first kind of exercise is merely another example of the nominal fallacy, and the latter has the disadvantage either of offering no concrete deductions or else yielding deductions that are clearly at odds with the facts.

But if psychology is ever to contribute to man's understanding of his own destructiveness, now is a time for optimism. The Vietnam War is an enormously powerful stimulus for thinking about aggression. Masses of vicarious participants were attracted by the emotional force of the longest and most fully reported war in modern history. A large number of people throughout the world are true survivors of the war and are aware of its contradictions. Also, we have seen at first hand the domestic equivalent of war—a ubiquitous crescendo of violent protests, riots and crimes of all forms. In addition, the universities in the 1960s produced a very

✪ An earlier version of KARL E. SCHEIBE's article was presented at the 1973 meetings of the Inter-American Society of Psychology in São Paulo, Brazil. Mr. Scheibe, chairman of the Department of Psychology at Wesleyan University, was a Fulbright Fellow at the Catholic University in São Paulo during the 1972-73 academic year.

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large number of behavioral scientists—psychologists, sociologists, political scientists—who are working actively on aggression and related problems. One result of these events has been a marked increase in published research on aggression. Over eighty percent of the more than seven hundred references cited in R. N. Johnson's *Aggression in Man and Animals* were published since 1960. Finally, optimism is warranted because a certain conceptual and linguistic liberation has occurred within psychology. In token of this liberation, I use the word "evil" in my title, a term that psychologists in the past have thought suitable only for theologians and philosophers of ethics.

This essay has a very modest objective in relation to the magnitude of the problem and also in relation to the progress that may be anticipated in the near future. My objective is to delineate the essential features of a certain form of human aggression, of which wars are one representation. In my view, the major psychological work involved in this form of aggression is performed and completed before the execution of a single violent act. This work consists of transforming individuals into agents of aggression, plus indicating and degrading the object of aggression. In this manner, legitimized aggression is potentiated, or armed.

Before discussing this process it is necessary to lay some conceptual groundwork by successively excluding forms of putative aggressive behavior that are not within my central focus. A starting premise is that the topic of aggression as it is currently considered in psychology is inconsistent and logically disjunctive. In good representative texts on aggression, such as Johnson's, we find discussions of a loosely related family of phenomena—the agonistic behavior of Siamese fighting fish, the My Lai incident, the predation of animals, the bombing of cities, the use of drugs and brain stimulation in eliciting aggression, and the laboratory administration of pseudoshocks. In causal patterns or in observed behavior, these examples have little in common. The application of a few conceptual distinctions will render this amorphous family of events more coherent and allow us to focus on one psychologically uniform subtype of aggression.

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Reasoned versus Caused Aggression

In *The Concept of Motivation,* R. S. Peters makes a distinction between reasoned acts, in which an individual guides his behavior according to purposive rules, and caused behaviors ("happenings") in which the person is psychologically passive. What appears to be the same behavior may be included in either category, depending on the mode of participation of the actor in the direction of the behavior. The quivering and half-falls of the high wire walker may be the result of lack of skill or a sudden wind, or they may be part of the production—purposive, rule-following behaviors, done for a reason rather than for a cause. Staying to see the act a second and third time will support one or the other of these interpretations, and an interview with the performer may further clarify whether the behaviors in question were purposefully done or merely suffered.

It will be objected by those with a great passion for unity and smoothness in matters of explanation that what are here called reasoned acts of aggression must ultimately be explained in causal terms. This is a good rhetorical point, but one that must be rejected on functional and pragmatic grounds. Plans and reasons appear commonly as the background conditions for human aggression. To claim that such reasons never enter into the actual determination of events is merely to beg the question and to hide in equivocation, for the actual mechanics of the causal process are never fully displayed.

The suggestion by Peters and other "action theorists" that the distinction between causes and reasons be accepted as part of motivational psychology has met with great resistance. Behaviorism, as well as classical psychoanalysis, has modeled its motivational principles on an imagined version of physical science that permits explanations only in causal terms. Unfortunately, the acceptance by psychologists of this conceit has resulted in a kind of enforced ignorance. Confidence in reasons is abandoned in favor of motive-based interpretations.

Even such a thoughtful and comprehensive treatment as

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Fromm's *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* does not avoid confusion on this issue. Fromm accepts a category of aggressive acts that are instrumental to other objectives, such as acquisition of territories or resources. These are set against aggressive acts that have no instrumental significance—and are irrational. The "psychical motivation" of German opinion leaders prior to World War I is described as a "mixture of group narcissism, instrumental aggression, and the wish to make a career and to gain power within and through this nationalistic movement." But in the subsequent chapters on "malignant aggression" he shows how what appear to be the reasons for aggression in this composite may be interpreted in terms of motives such as sadism, masochism, pathological boredom, necrophilia, or characteristics of either "character structure" or the nervous system. Thus Fromm first accepts the proposed distinction between reasons and causes, then collapses it and regains the psychologist's advantage as the unique provider of explanations. To show how much he despises human aggression, Fromm goes so far as to set the reasoned-caused distinction on its head by arguing that only human aggression is truly malignant and irrational—our destructiveness is rooted in our condition as civilized beings.

A consistent distinction between reasons and causes avoids obscurantism and the accompanying temptation to show disapproval of aggressive acts by demonstrating their base motivational origins. Without denying the problematic status of the reasoned-caused distinction, I hope to illustrate its utility by a few examples.

It has been shown that rage behavior in cats, rats and monkeys can be reliably elicited by electrical stimulation applied to portions of the hypothalamus or amygdaloid structures of the brain. In such elicited rage attacks, a purpose is to be found in the antecedent chain of events, but only in the head of the experimenter and not in the head of the stimulated animal. The experimental animals fall outside the range of docility that Edward Tolman prescribed as a necessary condition for the application of purposive behavioral analysis. However, the experimenter is also engaged in aggressive behavior in that he is actively involved

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in the instigation of violent attacks. But if asked what he is up to, the experimenter would probably reply that the production of violence is quite incidental to his ultimate objectives, which have to do with the development of new knowledge, or the perfection of techniques of control, or grinding out another publication.

A purposive actor is not necessary to the production of aggressive behavior. Hydrophobic ("mad") dogs have not been instigated by any purpose to run around biting people. At the human level the same kind of caused aggression occurs. A good case has been made that Charles Whitman, perpetrator of massive indiscriminate killing at the University of Texas in 1966, was literally compelled to this violent culmination. His autopsy revealed a malignant tumor in the amygdaloid structure of his brain. His written self-description prior to the shootings is psychologically consistent with such a physical condition:

> I don't understand what it is that compels me. . . . I don't really understand myself these days. . . . I have been a victim of many unusual and irrational thoughts. . . . After my death I wish that an autopsy would be performed on me to see if there is any visible physical disorder. I have had some tremendous headaches in the past. . . . It was after much thought that I decided to kill my wife. . . . I love her dearly and she has been a fine wife to me. I cannot rationally pinpoint any specific reason for doing this.

It is as if Whitman was caused to engage in violence despite his conscious desire to avoid this course of action and the lack of any reason for violence.

A very different sort of explanation is called for by the recent murders committed by Palestinian guerrillas in the Middle East conflict. Members on missions of violence knew very well what they were up to, and the reasons for their actions are shared and applauded by a large reference group. It is a gross mistake—but not one that psychiatrists and psychologists are beyond making—to label such individuals "paranoid schizophrenics" or as otherwise mentally deranged. Militancy in the Irish Republican Army,

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the Quebec Liberation Front, the FRELIMO of Portuguese Africa or the Symbionese Liberation Army is similarly characterized by certifiable acts of violence. Those who say that these acts are evidence of illness simply reveal their disagreement with the political objectives of the perpetrators, or else they fail to understand those political objectives. The difference between barbarity and heroism lies more in the observer's point of view than in the content of the acts themselves. Such acts fit the paradigm of purposive, rule-following behavior. An analysis of the acts themselves involves finding the sets of beliefs and values that provide convincing explanations.

The distinction between caused and reasoned aggression has additional implications. It has been suggested that capital punishment has no effect on homicide rates precisely because murderers usually do not make rational decisions to kill. Most reported homicides in Western nations are impulsive acts rather than planned liquidations. In the present terms, enraged or impulsive homicides are caused and operate independently of regulative social norms.

The reasoned-caused distinction also sheds light on the proposition—popularized by Konrad Lorenz in *On Aggression,* that man is almost unique among species of the animal kingdom for engaging in the killing of his own kind. While it is true that reports by ethologists of conspecific killing are rare, we may doubt the satisfactoriness of the comparative base line. As Johnson has noted, "If a baboon came to Boston disguised as an anthropologist, he might prowl the city for several months without ever seeing a single killing. He might then go back to Africa and report that humans are unusually peaceful and rarely kill each other." Indeed, most people can say that they never have seen one human being kill another one. Yet because of the human ability to symbolize remote events and the modern capacities for mass communication, it might seem as if we are constantly observing human conspecific killing. On those rare occasions when observers of nonhuman animals have truly extensive contact with their subjects, they too find instances of conspecific aggression and killing.

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Such killing has been observed in lions, in various insects, in lizards, elephants, baboons and hippopotamuses.

Nevertheless it is quite possible that conspecific killing among human beings is more common than among lower animals. For caused aggressions—impulsive fits of rage, reflexive reactions to releasing stimuli—it may be speculated that the number of potentially fatal instances is about the same for man and for the higher primates. However, because of man's sophisticated technology of killing—his weaponry—a far larger proportion of these events result in death. In the United States, about twenty thousand persons are killed by guns each year. In Detroit, our most murderous city, it is estimated that one out of every three citizens has a handgun. If these weapons did not exist, would the assailants go to the trouble of stabbing, or, more work still, of killing with the bare hands? I know of no experiments in which higher primates have been equipped with deadly weapons, but if this line of thinking is correct, such a modification would greatly increase their intraspecific homicide rate.

Self-assertiveness versus Self-transcendence as Reasons for Aggression

"The crimes of violence committed for selfish, personal motives are historically insignificant compared to those committed *ad majorem gloriam Dei,* out of a self-sacrificing devotion to a flag, a leader, a religious faith or a political conviction." Whether or not Arthur Koestler's assertion about the relative prominence of these two types of reasoned aggression is correct, the distinction is a psychologically valid one. Reasoned acts of aggression fall into two subcategories—those in which the reason is narrowly economic for the individual agent of aggression, and those in which an agent transcends narrow economic interest for the sake of some collective interest or ideal.

Again, those for whom parsimony is the dominant methodological principle will resist the distinction between selfish and altruistic motives for aggression by insisting that ultimately what

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appears to be altruism must be explained in terms of self-interest. Of course, if self-interest includes all possible benefits to the individual, both material and abstract, then such an argument is in principle irrefutable—but it is also without scientific interest.

The sort of distinction that is intended is well illustrated in the standard social psychological experiments on competition and cooperation. In "prisoner's dilemma" games or in the experimental games of Morton Deutsch and Robert Krauss, a subject makes a choice between a competitive option, by which he hopes to improve his relative position among players of the game, and a cooperative option, in which the relative advantage of the subject is not improved but in which favorable results accrue to all members of the microcollectivity comprised by the players of the game.

An example of assertive aggressivity would be a violent act committed by a bank robber or other privately operating assailant. The same acts, if committed by a revolutionary group in the interest of obtaining funds or displaying strength, would be of the self-transcending kind. The anonymous air pirate who parachuted to earth with a very large ransom was apparently motivated only by self-interest. On the other hand, airliners have been commandeered by individuals from terrorist organizations to bargain for the release of prisoners or to collect ransoms to finance revolutionary operations.

The diagnostic problem posed by this distinction is not always an easy one—certainly no simpler than the earlier problem posed by the reasoned-caused distinction. During the Mexican Revolution, marauding groups engaged in robbery and destruction throughout the countryside were considered by some as mere opportunists and common criminals, while others saw them as attacking the established landholders and thereby furthering the revolutionary cause. Yet in principle, such difficult questions are resolvable—given sufficient information. What happens to the spoils of such raids? Are the bandits identified with some revolutionary leader? Is the choice of targets and methods consistent with either the self-serving or self-transcending hypothesis? Given this information, a plausible historical judgment could be made.

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It cannot be denied that service in collective causes provides a special kind of individual gratification. André Malraux has spoken of the Spanish Civil War as "a most profound experience of brotherhood." Shakespeare's Henry V exults just before the Battle of Agincourt, "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers." Fidel Castro's speeches are full of the glory of the struggle against imperialism. The common travail of the English people during the last world war produced a kind of elevated national morale that seems afterwards to have vanished. The story of nationalism is at once a romance and a chronicle of fire and blood. The kinds of rewards derived from participation in these experiences, as well as the honors and accolades given to heroes, are a product of self-transcendence, but they are not necessarily its objective. The collectivity bestows its rewards on individuals because they are seen as having sacrificed their own interests to those of the collectivity.

So the subtype of aggression that forms my principal topic is aggression which is reasoned rather than caused, and for which the reasons are self-transcending rather than self-assertive. As a shorthand expression for this category the term "legitimized aggression" will be used.

Elements of Legitimized Aggression

A critical element in all cases of legitimized aggression is the social collectivity. Such collectivities may be real and visible, such as an immediate family or tribe. They may be real but invisible, such as a nation or a trade union. Or, they may be theoretical abstractions, with varying degrees of manifest reality, such as social classes, *volk*, races, or the "community of saints." The relationship of the individual to such collectivities determines the potential for legitimized aggression.

Social collectivities are a means of establishing, maintaining and extending social identity. The collective aspect of human life begins at the moment the newborn infant is bestowed with a name and grants of membership in racial, national, kinship, gender-specific, and perhaps religious and occupational groups. Social

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identity develops as the person discovers what has been initially granted and accepts the duties and responsibilities entailed in this grant. In addition the person acquires new group memberships—new components of social identity—with maturation, the development of requisite skills, and the reciprocal process of social selection.

The relationship between the person and each of the social collectivities by which he is defined may be seen as an implicit two-way contract. The person performs valued services in his achieved roles and is recompensed with social prestige, power and money. For granted components of identity, the content of the contract is different. The duties required for maintenance of valid identity in nation, kinship groups and the like are normally minimal. But these entities, which provide the initial grants of identity, have the authority to require much more of the individual, on occasion. Employers must use positive social incentives to legitimate new requests for worker performance. Identity-granting institutions—nation, church, family—can require much more of the individual, and without promise of compensation. Instead, they characteristically rely on the loyalty that is the product of the initial grant of identification. An individual can refuse such requests only at the cost of being labeled traitor, heretic, or prodigal.

In functional terms all of the collectivities in which the individual has valid membership do not have equal power in commanding his loyalty. In general, it can be said that identity-granting collectivities have greater power in commanding loyalty than do collectivities in which membership is achieved.

However, even among granting collectivities, an ordering must be established on the occasion of conflicting demands. When a conflict occurs in the dictates of the church and the dictates of the nation, the individual will decide in favor of the institution that is of more fundamental importance to him. Thomas More and Thomas à Becket opted to be labeled traitors to England rather than heretics to the church. Henry VIII made a different decision. The choices made in such situations reflect the master element of the person's social identity. Recently, two Italian reporters

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were excommunicated for having recorded and published a number of confidential confessions. The excommunications, however, will probably matter little, since both had declared themselves atheists. Thus, canceled loyalty left these persons free to betray the church in favor of a more material master.

Nations normally have the legitimate authority to call citizens away from their occupations, communities and families to defend common interests. It is important to recognize that this power is based primarily on legitimized authority and not on coercion or material incentive. In terms of the selfish interests of soldiers, fighting battles cannot appear rational without enormous or highly specialized rewards. But it does not appear irrational from the standpoint of the collectivity for individuals to sacrifice their interests for the sake of the collectivity to which they owe their being.

Wars are not waged and crusades are not started for the sake of the narrow self-interests of the individual soldiers. Recruits are obliged to transcend selfish concerns for the sake of the collectivity in which identity is claimed. Agents of legitimized aggression are activated not by physical coercion but by a contractual moral obligation. The extent to which physical coercion or material incentive must be used as a way of goading individuals into fighting is a gauge of the extent to which the collectivity lacks legitimate authority in commanding the loyalty of its members. A collectivity that has to depend on slaves and mercenaries for its aggressive force is morally bankrupt. A collectivity in which the soldiers fight without being forcibly conscripted and without hope of financial reward is displaying a high degree of legitimated moral authority.

Conflicts between management-hired strikebreakers and union strikers, between government mercenaries and local liberation movements, or between hired bank guards and bandits representing revolutionary movements are characterized by an imbalance of moral authority. Such moral mismatches can be compensated only by an imbalance in the opposite direction in numbers and weaponry.

Conflicts between two morally legitimate collectivities are of

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a different kind. Examples are tribal wars, many international wars, family feuds, racial wars, some genocidal campaigns and wars of conquest. Unless there is a great imbalance of material force, such conflicts tend to last a very long time—even over several centuries, as witnessed in the struggle of self-sacrificing and totally committed warring factions in Northern Ireland or the Middle East.

The way in which legitimate authority can function as a social lever—turning the individual into an aggressor—can be illustrated on a small scale in laboratory experimentation. In Stanley Milgram's studies of obedience, the implicit contract of the psychological experiment is used as a means of compelling subjects to engage in ostensibly harmful behaviors that would, in the abstract, be considered repugnant and morally unjustified. The subject, in order to continue his self-identification as a "good subject," must accept the legitimate authority of the scientist-experimenter. Within the actual situational constraints of the experiment, individual choices are not made on the basis of some general conception of right and wrong. Instead, given the provisional social definition of "subject in a psychological experiment," behaviors are legitimated by the apparent sanction of the defining authority —the experimenter. In fact, the actual power of the experimental situation for potential personal harm is not demonstrably great. In fact, the "shocks" delivered by the subjects were not real and the cries of pain and anguish from the experimenter's accomplice were also part of a performance. Similarly, M. T. Orne and Fred Evans have shown that a variety of antisocial and apparently harmful acts (picking up a poisonous snake, dipping a bare hand into boiling liquid, throwing a beaker of acid at another person) can be elicited by hypnosis or by special instructions to simulate hypnosis. In all cases, subjects are responding obediently to apparently legitimate requests from a recognized authority—the experimenter or hypnotist. Also, in all cases, the subjects are in a fundamental sense correct in their assessment of the situation. Events that are contrived to look harmful are in reality completely safe.

These experiments demonstrate how an occasional and transi-

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tory social contract can be used as a way of legitimating behaviors that are at least potentially harmful and that are not normally considered legitimate acts. That the experimenters arranged things so that nobody would really get hurt is a fact, but not a necessary fact, in the causal pattern of the behaviors themselves. In the experiments, it could have been otherwise. In the nonlaboratory social world, it often is otherwise. In order for aggression to be legitimated, it must be given that individuals are reciprocally involved with some social collectivity or collective ideal. Usually, this component of identity is granted rather than acquired. The collectivity then has the moral authority to ask of the individual that he give up his narrow interests in favor of those of the group of which he is part.

The Assignment of Evil

This call to self-abrogation is often accompanied by the indication of the enemy—another collectivity which is portrayed as threatening the welfare of the home group. This process may be called the "assignment of evil," for the enemy is not seen merely as a spirited competitor or an ambitious stranger. Rather, in order for their elimination to be made psychologically legitimate, enemies must be depicted as subhuman, bestial, unworthy of basic human rights and privileges. When these phases are completed, the psychological work of aggression is done. The rest is merely a mechanical and well-determined process of acting out the conflict.

The potentiation of aggression is a social process consisting of two kinds of preparation—one general and one specific. The general process is accomplished by socializing bonds of identity between the individual and the social collectivities that might later command his loyalty. Specific direction is given to aggressive acts by the indication of a suitable enemy—another collectivity which is defined as both menacing and degraded.

When these subprocesses are completed the results are powerful: justified hatred of the enemy and comradeship in arms.

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Koestler has used Marc Antony's funeral oration as an illustration of this transformation. Initially the citizens of Rome are urged to sublimate their individual small-mindedness and selfishness and to look on the great and noble Caesar. In this state of heightened communion, the enemy—Caesar's murderers—are indicated. The call for battle is issued and all respond happily, joyously, to the invitation.

In a northeastern Brazilian city, a family feud is proceeding after over twenty years of activity. According to reports, the Alencar and Sampaio families have been shooting each other since 1949. The story is a familiar one—the scenario would be found in hundreds of other examples. After a death on one side, the other side goes about the identification of the killers and forms its own list of prime targets. When one of these is eventually killed, the stalemate moves one step further. Along the way, the initial justification for the feud is forgotten, just as nobody could quite remember how the United States came to be so involved in Vietnam.

In other cases, the material or economic reasons for the initial conflict remain in evidence. From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, it has been in the economic interests of the expanding nations of European origin in the Americas to take possession of the lands occupied by the indigenous populations. In the portion of this conquest enacted in the United States, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Indians were depicted as primitive savages, who achieved virtue only with death. Once evil is assigned, the extirpation of the malignancy becomes an act of courage and heroism. General Custer, in his time, was being seriously considered as a candidate for the presidency of the United States. His Argentine counterpart, General Roca, who commanded the liquidation of the Indians of Patagonia, was richly praised. His equestrian statue is still pointed out with pride to visitors to Buenos Aires.

When Pascal said, "Never is evil done so thoroughly or so well as when it is done in a good cause," he was referring to harm-doing of the reasoned, legitimized kind. The major intent of this discussion has been to delineate the social-psychological antecedents

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of this kind of aggression. Social identity is a necessary mediating link between the goodness of causes and the destructiveness of consequences. Causes are just when they are framed in an understanding of the welfare of the collectivity which provides fundamental grants of identity to its human elements. To see justified harmdoing as evil requires only a slight shift in perspective—a shift that is not possible if one's identity is anchored in the acting collectivity.

This kind of argument, linking the justification of massive aggression to social collectivities, is hardly original, for this is a major ingredient in anarchist thinking. The next step is to identify all extended collectivities as evil. When this step is accomplished, the use of terror and acts of violence against established social institutions, in the manner of Bakunin, is justified. Thus, an ideal or a single charismatic personality may provide the functional equivalents of the collectivity in terms of justifying aggression. But still the concept of identity is central. Still the potential for legitimated aggression follows from what are for the person the most fundamental elements of his identity—be that anarchist, patriot, Christian, German, black man, family member, woman, member of a tribe, communist, fascist, democrat, or free spirit. The constant element of this argument is that identity extension, or self-transcendence, is linked to the potentiation of legitimized aggression.

This idea conflicts sharply with what is commonly considered to be positive socialization. In Leonard Kohlberg's progressive stages of moral development, or in the description by Piaget that provided the inspiration for Kohlberg's work, the general direction of moral socialization is seen as progressing from egocentrism to identification with more and more extended and abstract entities. At the last stage of moral development, the individual no longer makes moral choices on the basis of conformity with existing law and custom, but in accord with abstract conceptions of justice, fairness, equity and freedom. Such individuals are notably immune to being manipulated into fighting over some just cause. However, the saints, religious and political leaders who attain this

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degree of detachment from secular concerns, have the capacity to inspire the loyalty of disciples and followers, who may be called upon to defend the faith in very material ways. A self-appointed prophet, such as Charles Manson, makes his own rules about right and wrong, and respects no subsidiary human law. His followers, once identified with him, do his bidding without moral qualm—as a proof of fealty and a celebration of community. The murders committed by Charles Manson's followers fit very well the paradigm of reasoned, legitimized aggression. First a grant of identity is accepted from a collectivity. Next, enemies are indicated and the subjects are called to show their loyalty, which they do with commendable spirit.

The Missing Content

This discussion is meant to provide a general characterization of the major psychological features of legitimized aggression as it occurs in a variety of settings and circumstances. As a rough analogy, the potentiation of legitimized aggression is like the arming of a weapon, while the assignment of evil is like pointing it at a specific target. An order is then given and the harm is done.

Such a conception is both nonreductive and virtually empty of cultural content. No appeal is made to physiological processes, instincts or learning paradigms. Also, the major concepts—social collectivity, social identity and self-transcendence—are vague in that no necessary roles are given to institutions such as family, nation, church, or organization. Obviously, for such a model to be useful, it must be fitted with content by some supplementary discipline. The choice is obvious; this kind of psychology needs to be filled by history.

When the story is told of an individual or any group, we may learn specifically what collective entities have provided functional grants of identity. We must look to history to fill in the skeletal description of how enemies are made—how evil is assigned. And we must recognize that the marching orders that convert the armed potential for harm into an actual physical result can take

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many forms—forms that will be determined by the historical meanings of the moment. Nevertheless, psychological order and coherence is discernible in that all of a variety of historically determined forms are homologous in function. The test of the utility of this conception will come in attempts to fit it to a very wide set of historical cases, without forcing or distortion.

In this way, psychology can be of real service to history. Historians and observers of human affairs often must stop with the recognition of paradox. For example, Orwell has noted in connection with modern warfare, "Human beings only started to fight each other in earnest when there was no longer anything to fight about." By employing the present psychological model, in specific historical content, it is possible to say what men are fighting about and to show that the reasons for their fighting each other have great consistency over time and space.

Psychology needs contact with the content of history. We do not need pseudoexplanations of legitimized aggression nearly so much as we need a filled-out acquaintance of this process as it has occurred and as it continues to occur. As Philip Hallie has said in a very similar context, we need heuristic models that allow observation and conceptualization of the branchings and flowerings of our subject, not root models that force us into oversimplification and invite a false security.

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Insomnia

KATHRYN STRIPLING

That was no moment
I should spend this whole night asking
questions of. More like the moonlight merely
taking shape there on the ragged quilt
so that my fingers, touching it,
began to trace the stitches of another pattern's
tree of life's leaves branching like a peacock tail.
Or so it seemed that night I woke to feel

my grandmother living like my own skin
at that very instant feeling cold
wind from a broken window pane: no help
at all those scraps of calico she'd sewn together
for my birthday. It was too much
to be borne at twenty-two, the thought
of how her body must be sleeping
with its legs drawn up into themselves to hide
the toenails twisted like the true-love knots
she used to sew across the edges of her nightgown
sleeves. How could I dare to look
into her open mouth that breathed, that

breathed? At last a dog barked
blocks away and I got up to fetch a cigarette
to keep from hearing what I thought

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must be her life's time passing like the sound
of bobbin thread unwinding, or the breath
from some collapsing lung. Or was it
my own life I was afraid to hear instead,
its blood-roots weaving me a gift
of silence too far down to comprehend?

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The People versus Literature

ROGER ROSENBLATT

THE PROBLEM OF THE MOMENT IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, which is also the essential problem, is the correspondence between the highest ideals of learning and those of a democratic society. The apparent opposition of these ideals is our continuing nineteenth-century inheritance. That century, which managed to measure the velocity of light, to weigh the sun, to decipher the origins of the earth, to establish the theory of organic evolution, the germ theory of zymotic diseases, the molecular theory of gases, the theory of the conservation of energy, and to form the bases of linguistics and psychology, nevertheless left us with our most difficult educational conflict unresolved. Should this conflict remain unresolved for the next twenty-six years, we will simply pass it on to our colleagues in the twenty-first century who, like ourselves, will embrace it as a peculiarly modern problem.

Of course, it really is a modern problem. As long as one regards modern democracy as desirable, universal education becomes one of its most important postulates. Education is among other things an instrument of freedom. If the actions of government are to be determined by popular will, then popular will must be informed and enlightened. Educators, in turn, must devise a form of education that provides the greatest numbers with the greatest good. Since the numbers inevitably present themselves, all we need to decide is what constitutes the greatest good.

The process of reaching that decision has been attended by a wide range of public reports in the past few years, commissioned by various government and private agencies. These reports presume generally that the problem of education in America is a structural

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one, and that the key to the democratization of knowledge lies in the *form* of a particular course, program, or institution. Accordingly, new educational structures are now advocated that are meant to accommodate themselves to the entire breadth of the American people, from those who seek a traditional pattern of liberal arts or general education to those wishing to apply their educations to specific skills and jobs. The structures may vary considerably and are fluid in themselves.

No area of study is potentially as susceptible to this presumption as the study of literature. It is surprising, therefore, that in the reports advocating basic changes in American education, English is almost never used as an example discipline. Yet, unless the advocates of structural change intend to do away with literary studies altogether, a possibility I would not easily dismiss, we must reasonably conclude that the study of literature, like everything else, will also be asked to accommodate itself to a heterogeneous population. It is no secret that there are colleges in this country at this moment devising courses in English for the auto worker, English for doctors.

The fact that we may regard such manipulations as preposterous is not the point to dwell on. The more serious issue is why the study of literature, so vast in its range, so plentiful in practitioners, has failed to convey to the public and public-minded educators the truth of its value: that it is worthwhile for all people in all seasons. There seems always to have been in the public mind an assumed association of the study of literature with high and distant culture. Ironically, people connect literature with the high life, seeing poetry and drama as emblems of an aristocracy; yet most of the men and women who created the literature we study were not aristocrats in any sense but the temperamental. Melville and Dickens certainly thought of themselves as writers of and for people. Shakespeare was a hard-working playwright. Yeats would have liked being an aristocrat, but his business sense would not permit it. Even Tolstoy only dressed up as a full-fledged count after the journalists went away.

Nevertheless, the association of English with cultural snobbery has persisted, and for two consecutive reasons. Most of the creators of literature have not been snobs; but the surveyors and conveyers

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of literature, particularly in the early part of the century, were snobs of the highest order. In the heat of their competition with a classical education, our early American professors of English seemed determined to place literature out of common reach. Their attitude toward literature, not literature itself, was the culprit; and it was not until the 1930s that American departments of English would formally concede that those who were not American, white, or Protestant, could be entrusted with the treasures of the past. Adding curiosity to curiosity, many of those later academics who were at last admitted to the temple sought to prove themselves worthy of their exceptional status by imitating the same people who initially sought to bar them.

Afterward, a bifurcated snobbery of a different sort entered the discipline. On one side amassed the informationists, declaring that literature was only to be appreciated by means of historiography and a dozen ancient languages. On the other side, E. E. Cummings having convinced the country that "feeling is first," there arose in the ranks of the academy a snobbery of aesthetic sensation that opposed the informationists diametrically. Both forms of snobbery proceeded from the same impulse: to keep a kind of emotional and intellectual privacy attached to the study of books. Each side also claimed that the other was false to the subject. Between the two, the aesthetic snobbery was probably the more severe, despite the fact that it always accused the informationists of being undemocratic.

This latter accusation is interesting to explore: the connection between a pursuit of knowledge and the form of government in which that pursuit occurs. Not that a form of government necessarily affects the pursuit directly, but the general cultural assumptions that ramify from any form of government undoubtedly do affect people's attitudes toward learning. Western governments learned their business by imitating the organization of the church. Western businesses and academies imitate Western governments. The ideal of democracy has not only affected the kinds of education we offer, but the standard for the character of education as well. It has become increasingly urgent to teachers in all disciplines that whatever is taught must have a democratic capability and nature.

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In practice this desire ordinarily has no meaning whatsoever, at least not in terms of a coherent definition of democracy. Democracy as applied to academic disciplines usually means nothing more than popularity. At Harvard in 1969 there was a great hoop-la in the *Crimson* because the English department had finally gone "democratic" by adding a few more courses in the twentieth century. Democracy in that instance meant updated or flexible. Yet it was the word that came to mind as an expression of virtue. No matter what one is referring to, something that is good, courageous, and worth preserving in education is "democratic," and that which is not democratic, even if democratic only means popular, is expendable.

The bifurcated snobbery within departments of English naturally created points of mediation as well as poles. Many of the best teachers and scholars of literature that we have continue to moderate these extremes, and to use them to their own and their students' advantage. It must be said, too, that many of the best teachers and scholars we have remain at the extremes, and are no less valuable for being there. Nor are those who moderate more "democratic" for their moderations. Their ability to synthesize two polar views may demonstrate their capacities as humanists, but they are teaching no more or less of a democratic subject than their colleagues at the extremes.

The trouble is that none of them, none of us, is teaching a popular subject either, that is, popular in the sense of a study that has conveyed its merit and meaning to the citizens at large. If the essential conflict in American education is between high culture and democratic ideals, English has somehow placed itself at the center of that conflict. In fact, rather than having placed itself, it seems to have meandered there accidentally. Now, when cries for the democratization of knowledge are at a particularly high pitch, English, by appearing to be an a-popular and undemocratic subject, is in a peculiarly precarious position. By not seeming to qualify as a subject for the people, it has made itself potentially available to every conceivable vagary of educational reform.

The point is not that English could not profit from reform; that is too general an issue. The question, rather, is whether the subject need be reformed with an eye to increasing its popularity. Is the

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study of literature, as presently constructed, actually at odds with popular needs? By their looks educational theorists seem to say so, yet we who teach this subject rarely think of it as remote or exotic. What, then, are we doing in our profession that encourages this misconception? Conversely, what are we not doing in our teaching and scholarship that would demonstrate the sense and value of our work?

Robert Graves's "Ulysses" is an example of a good poem, and a good example of the kind of literature that is potentially adaptable to various audiences and methods of teaching. It is a poem about Ulysses, a hero, a man, a driven man, a neurotic man—all of these. And it is a poem about epic and adventure as well. Some would contend that it is precisely the type of poem that ought not to be studied in community colleges or in university extension courses because of their transitory populations, or to lawyers or would-be farmers. Others would contend that if the poem is taught in these and other specialized arenas, its presentation ought to be skewed to the assumed needs of the audience. Still others would contend that the poem ought only to be studied in combination with another subject, such as psychology, history, or folklore. In other words, what might be said of the poem is what is being said of the study of literature generally these days—that it cannot stand on its own as an intellectual endeavor because it is removed from popular needs and desires.

The poem is easy to understand, even at first reading:

> To the much-tossed Ulysses, never done
> With woman whether gowned as wife or whore,
> Penelope and Circe seemed as one:
> She like a whore made his lewd fancies run,
> And wifely she a hero to him bore.
>
> Their counter-changings terrified his way:
> They were the clashing rocks, Symplegades,
> Scylla and Charybdis too were they;
> Now they were the storms frosting the sea with spray
> And now the lotus island's drunken ease.
>
> They multiplied into the Sirens' throng,
> Forewarned by fear of whom he stood bound fast
> Hand and foot helpless to the vessel's mast,

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Yet would not stop his ears: daring their song
He groaned and sweated till that shore was past.

One, two and many: flesh had made him blind,
Flesh had one pleasure only in the act,
Flesh set one purpose only in the mind—
Triumph of flesh and afterwards to find
Still those same terrors wherewith flesh was racked.

His wiles were witty and his fame far known,
Every king's daughter sought him for her own,
Yet he was nothing to be won or lost.
All lands to him were Ithaca: love-tossed
He loathed the fraud, yet would not bed alone.*

Graves, giving his Ulysses the epithet "much-tossed," plays on the designation at the outset so that we know we are seeing a different Ulysses from the start. Characters from the epic and mythology are invoked to support this picture of the man, a man obsessed with the desire for experience. The experience is specifically sexual, and therefore, Graves suggests, more terrifying than exploits at an actual sea. This Ulysses, whose ancient name means "hater" is much-tossed and "love-tossed," and his odyssey is a nightmare of his mind.

To a class of students who had never heard of Ulysses or Odysseus this poem will have certain meanings, but not a great many. Penelope and Circe will seem merely to be female names, and the nature of the relationship of each woman with the hero will extend only as far as the narrative lines of the poem:

She like a whore made his lewd fancies run,
And wifely she a hero to him bore.

The Symplegades, Scylla and Charybdis, into which Penelope and Circe transmogrify in the poem, will remain unidentified, but in context will increase the sense of terror the poet seeks. The references to "lotus island" and the Sirens explain themselves pretty well, although a picture of the sequence of the total voyage would

* From the book *Collected Poems 1966* by Robert Graves.
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remain unclear in the students' minds. Nevertheless, the poem could be understood and appreciated at this level of inquiry. For purposes of a course in modern literature, or simply in the reading of poetry, it could be analyzed effectively and even enjoyed.

The chances are, however, that today this poem would not be taught to students who were unfamiliar with the *Odyssey* for the very reason of that unfamiliarity. In its place might be offered a poem about the energy crisis, a Vietnam veteran, or any subject that would appear to suit the potential taste—the phrase is "engage the interest"—of a contemporary group of students. Not that the students who were unfamiliar with the *Odyssey* would not get the sexual allusions in the poem. Those, although closer to universal mystery, would be considered universal knowledge. Rather, the disqualification of the poem would lie in its dependence on other and older literature. Since the students could never be expected to learn about other and older literature, it is supposed that they would be missing more than they would be getting by studying Graves's poem.

In fact, this is so. If one cannot refer to the depiction of Odysseus in Homer, much of the meaning of this modern poem is lost. If one does not know Homer's account of Odysseus in the land of the Lotophagi, or of the anger of Poseidon, or of the adventure on Aeolus, much is lost as well. It helps for students to know that Scylla was a female monster before she became a projecting rock. It helps to know about Calypso, who is not mentioned in the poem, and about Nausicaa, one of the "king's daughters" to whom Graves alludes. The essential irony of the poem is missed if one is ignorant of Penelope and Telemachus.

There is a great deal more missing than Homer. Were students to gain a full understanding of Graves's poem, they would need to know about Dante's Ulysses, particularly why Dante located Ulysses so deep in hell. It would be useful to read Daniel's "Ulysses and the Siren" and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. It would be absolutely necessary to study Tennyson's poem on the subject, and to note the development of Ulysses as an introspective and reflective hero. Joyce, too, wrote about Ulysses. Students of modern literature ought to consider why and how this hero has been carried forward as a representative of men from age to age.

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All of these things ought to be known in reading Graves. Yet should that fact suggest an argument for not reading Graves? Or worse, should it suggest that the poem should only be presented to specialized interest groups (here, I imagine, to the oversexed, as the poem seems to pertain to them most directly)? The answer, obviously, is that the poem is worth looking at by anybody, and that the fact that it is apprehensible on both immediate and historical levels only confirms its general merit. If such a poem were actually capable of leading students from modern psychology back to the *Odyssey,* that would be all to the good. Like the *Odyssey* itself, Graves's "Ulysses" is literature for people, all people.

Yet the feeling persists that the *study* of the poem, the means by which our understanding of the poem is conveyed, is not for people. Clearly, this is false, and it derives from a faulty attitude held not only by the people, who are as abstract as ever, but also by those of us who bear the discipline. Somehow we have allowed the study in our charge to appear removed from life, although the content of the work we analyze is the most direct means of affecting the feelings and ideas of others. There is hardly a modern citizen we might ask who does not know more about internal medicine or political science than the study of English. There is hardly a citizen who knows what the study of English involves. Yet, as Kafka's doorkeeper says to the man before the law, "this gate was made only for you."

Briefly defined, literature is the beautiful and orderly expression of human activity in written words. It deals with people, and it does something good. In the highest uses of language it shows our common heroism, cruelty, capacity for gentleness and stupidity, our resilience, frailty, magnanimity, selfishness, our blunderings and grace. Among the arts, it offers the most comprehensive expression of our humanity. Accordingly, the study of literature is the instrument by which such expression may be made clear or clearer (clarity not being necessary to beauty or order), made known or more widely known. What beauty may mean one leaves to the proving power of an individual critic. Enough to say that literature does something good, and that the study of literature also does something good, though it is not the same good.

The study of literature does specific things for us. It expands

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what we see; it enhances our appreciation of compression and selectivity; it teaches us to look for symbols and images in our actions and character; it reveals the patterns in literature, and indirectly in our lives; it develops taste and the admiration of excellence; it helps us to be precise, to recognize the difference, as Twain said, "between the word and the right word"; perhaps best of all, it reminds us of our common lot. In a world of increasing sentimentality and panic it is essential to know how to probe, unravel, and evaluate grand constructs, and in so doing to be able to recognize one's basic relationship to them. This, too, is what the study of literature does. This is news worth sharing.

The problem, I have suggested, pertains to attitude, but it is not to be underrated. Problems pertaining to cultural attitudes are often the most difficult to solve; their being amorphous and elusive does not mean that they do not exist. Despite its genuine value, the study of literature has failed to make itself publicly admirable and understandable. The penalty for this failure is that English is now called upon to adjust itself to a varied population, whereas in fact the adjustment need go in exactly the other direction.

The advantage of an attitudinal problem, however, is that it may be solved by a changing of attitude. Teachers of English must remind themselves continually not only that what we teach was written for people, but that our discipline is created for people as well. In writing "Ulysses," Graves was not hiding Homer from his audience, but instead revealing him. Similarly, Eliot brings us closer to Agamemnon, Milton to Samson, Chaucer to Criseyde, and so on. In so doing these writers bring us closer to ourselves in our various capacities. By offering others an interpretation and understanding of these things, we also bring them closer to themselves, to us, and to each other. This is constantly true, no matter what our students do for a living or intend to do.

Whatever we call culture depends on inspiration joined to understanding. If culture depended solely on inspiration, it would in turn depend on a continuum of golden ages—the heights of arts and poetry sustained in a constant ecstasy. When the golden ages waned and faltered, which they inevitably would, so would the culture. The study of literature is of the Bronze Age. It brings

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the understanding that recognizes inspiration for whatever it is worth, that selects intelligently among all former inspirations, and that often creates the climate for the new ones. When Goering heard the word "culture," he felt like going for his pistol. It wasn't the inspiration he wanted to shoot—it was understanding.

Writing of the signs of his times, Carlyle lamented that "men have lost their belief in the Invisible, and believe, and hope, and work only in the Visible; or, to speak it in other words: this is not a Religious age." The probable truth is that it is always a religious age, and the number of eloquent outcries such as Carlyle's against those who would decide otherwise only confirms the agelessness of religious thinking. Whatever anthologies or survey courses in Western civilization tell us to the contrary, men always believe in invisible things—perhaps only in invisible things—in values and feelings, as well as gods; in philosophies as well as superstitions. We have never believed in machines, as the simple-minded moralizing of science fiction demonstrates. And as for the industrial age, no one (except perhaps Carlyle) could ever have taken it seriously.

Teachers of literature have as their task to teach invisible things. John Donne listed among certain human impossibilities, "teach me to hear mermaids singing." That is precisely the work of the English teacher. He takes a body of knowledge whose substance is invisible, and must make others not only believe in its existence, but experience it personally. He seeks to bring an entire world of invisible things to those in his charge. He fights the good fight—not against technology or anything that easy, not against science, and certainly not against the inclinations or potential of people, but against other invisibles: the absence of flavor, seriousness and judgment.

Put simply, the study of literature contests everything in our culture that would work against our discernment and our spiritual and intellectual discomfort, which we sorely need. It fights the proposition that the public would rather be dull, and assumes instead, against all odds, that people need it. It has something worth knowing, and its practitioners must use everything in their power to spread that word abroad.

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Logic and Satire in *Alice in Wonderland*

ALVIN C. KIBEL

> "If there's no meaning in it," said the King, "that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any."

IT IS CURIOUS—to use the most important word in the books—how frequently "the Alices" are quoted in reference to grown-up affairs. Passages from them are used as chapter headings by logicians, theologians, scientists and philosophers, and they are ready sources of allusion on public and household occasions. Yet there is still, as Empson noted, very little serious criticism of them, despite this currency; the feeling persists that the books have their success in the local jokes and wordplay and that the charm of the fantasy would be dissipated by attention to thematic materials. Down the rabbit-hole or behind the mirror is only Dodgson, the obsessive, spinsterish don, hoping to seduce the child into emotional collusion against the adult world. It is easier to go off into jottings on Dodgson's personal eccentricities or talk about the schizophrenic Dodgson-Carroll split, parceling fantasy and intellect into separate compartments, than to discuss the unified achievement of the books. Even Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice,* valuable as it is, extrapolates individual passages to highly abstruse matters of which children are necessarily ignorant, and thereby gives the impression that where the intellectual substance of his jokes is concerned, Dodgson was writing over children's heads. But if the extrapolations are valid fun, the point is still the vigorous absurdity of the usages in which they are rooted, which children

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can well appreciate. Uniquely, Dodgson discovered an intellectual legitimacy in the childish viewpoint, making it available to both childish and adult intelligences, and it is rather misleading of Mr. Gardner to hint in his preface that the books keep their appeal through the good offices of scientists and mathematicians.

I raise this issue because it is, in a way, part of my subject. The Alices are eccentric performances about the child's need to deal with an eccentric world, and an ideal of courtesy is at their center. Dodgson has been called by one biographer "a genuine Victorian eccentric," and the force of the adjective may remind us how much we may have lost of the power to deal courteously with eccentricity. Courtesy signals intellectual as well as emotional strength; it requires seeing how aberrant behavior is not merely compulsive but the expression of variant conventionality. The value of conventions is to suit our compulsive energies to the needs of community, and courtesy recognizes that aberrant behavior is the expression of an alternative, habitable way of life; it supposes that we try to see the meaning of unfamiliar patterns of word and gesture, and credit the intelligence behind them, even where we do not find the effect congenial. In this sense the business of criticism is high courtesy, for it is always dealing with the relation of particular works to conventionality, in order to elucidate, to make intelligible, to understand. Since the critic is always judging from the standpoint of cogency, the term for him acquires much the same force as "maturity"; his efforts are directed at making what is immediately unfamiliar appear the work of intelligent choice, the expression of a plausible determination, and not merely aberrant or compulsive. The Alices are admittedly minor works and eccentric in their appeal to convention, but there is nothing weak-minded about the fun they poke at grown-up usages. The collusion with childhood is almost totally without intellectual condescension; this fact is remarkable enough in itself to justify the courtesy of criticism.

Most readers feel obscurely that the Alices are satires of some kind; the obscurity arises because the jokes are played out without the assumption of clear positives to set off against the targets. Empson identifies the curriculum described by the Mock Turtle

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as straight satire; his anxiety over the quality of Alice's education is another instance.

> "*I've* been to a day-school, too," said Alice. "You needn't be so proud as all that."
>
> "With extras?" asked the Mock Turtle, a little anxiously.
>
> "Yes," said Alice: "we learned French and music."
>
> "And washing?" said the Mock Turtle.
>
> "Certainly not!" said Alice indignantly.
>
> "Ah! Then yours wasn't a really good school," said the Mock Turtle in a tone of great relief. "Now, at *ours*, they had, at the end of the bill, 'French, music, *and washing*—extra'."

Apparently the last phrase was a customary addition to boarding school bills during the period. This hits off insecurities about social rank, which many secretly feel, by conflating them with the obvious stupidity of judging education by cost rather than substance; the effect is to impose a distance, making a habit or trait look ridiculous while assuring the reader that his intelligence is sufficient to disavow it, and I think that straight satire always works this way. But the tone of the books does nothing to indicate that the absurdity of the creatures is always fallible; on the contrary, their odd assumptions seem to go with the general queerness of the world, so that the child is right to try to fall in with them. (Alice's answer to the Mock Turtle—that he couldn't have wanted washing much at the bottom of the sea—is decidedly weak, but it shows that she takes his remark seriously.) The real target seems to be the impatience of the creatures at her failure to grasp their assumptions, as if it showed want of sense or weakness of intellectual character.

In the conventional fairy tale, the talking animals usually side with the child or offer it refuge from the oppressive adult world. Dodgson has adapted the convention by putting the creatures in place of the adults and making them intensely argumentative rather than physically menacing; the joke is partly at the child's expense that the familiar creatures of nursery fiction would function in this way and prove so incomprehensible. But their incomprehensibility is not a matter of sheer nonsense when measured

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by logical standards (otherwise Mr. Gardner's extrapolations would not be possible) and their impatience with Alice, which mirrors the chronic impatience of elders with their juniors, if rather more intense, has somewhere behind it the notion that language is perfectly adequate to the business of transmitting culture from one generation to the next. The child can speak and therefore should be able to take in the meaning of what is said; her inability is treated as refusal, as if she could perfectly well understand if she only *wanted* to badly enough. Her confusion is taken as a sign of moral weakness or—worse—outright viciousness of temper. Like the baby who sneezes when peppered by the cook, she does it to annoy, because she knows it teases.

As it happens, a clue arises about this subject in the very first paragraph of the books:

> Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

Well, what *is* the use of it? Dodgson, who wrote enough of them, might well wonder. (There is a story that Queen Victoria had been sufficiently amused by the first Alice to leave a standing order for the author's next book, only to receive Dodgson's *Condensation of Determinants*.) Prompted by some habitual adult practice, children often ask questions symptomatic of their intellectual distance from maturity. These questions bear a resemblance to the sort that philosophers pretend to be asking in order to sharpen awareness of what they already know. It caused something of a philosophic revolution when Wittgenstein dropped the pretense and began asking them in earnest—trying, as best he could, to assume the innocence of a child. ("Why can't my right hand give my left hand money?") Questions about the significance of behavior are usually answered by showing how some piece of activity is or is not part of a practice; the answers presume on the listener's ability to recognize the conditions under which the practice in question, or one very like it, obtains. ("That isn't really a *gift*, you see, be-

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cause. . . .") But since these can be recognized only by someone to whom the practice already makes sense, the answers are likely to be unintelligible to someone who really needs them. The mere fact that purposive activity can be designated in language is not enough to ensure understanding, for even the most painstaking description cannot show how the bits of detail constituting a practice *add up* to it, and without this the various steps in the action are bound to look pointless or even compulsive. In this case, the child knows what it is to read books without pictures or conversations but not what reading them amounts to, once simple diversion is out of the question; what is really a practice looks to her innocent eyes either mystifying or else the eccentric way her sister has of enjoying herself.

The whole life of culture is a tissue of practices intelligible within a particular framework of language and action, unintelligible without. Living within the framework, we are largely unaware of how much of it, including our powers of elucidation, is opaque to outsiders, like children. The gap in understanding can, of course, eventually be made up. The point is that making it up is never *simply* a matter of words; knowledge of a practice cannot be elucidated to someone wholly ignorant of anything like it but only imparted through apprenticeship, a slow process of habituation to given forms of behavior, of living within a framework of speech *and* action and so acquiring its sense of intelligibility. What grown-ups have in their keeping are such things as knowing what counts as disobedience, how to deliver an insult, the meaning of oaths and promises, why you button your jacket right over left or left over right, the respect to be accorded learning and truth. Much of it looks like the sort of thing that can be perpetuated simply through the medium of speech, by telling the next generation what to do, laying down the rules and seeing that the rules are followed. But acquiring a practice in this expository way requires familiarity with practices similar in kind, and not all practices are sufficiently analogous for this to be possible. To suppose otherwise is to believe that criteria of intelligibility are always independent of the practices exhibiting them and may be taken for granted in dealing with anyone capable of speech. (It

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is also to suppose that the source of grown-up authority is entirely a matter of the child's ignorance or its emotional stupidity.) The ideal of maturity in every culture is associated with knowledge of this sort—knowledge that must be acquired through apprenticeship and not merely transmitted by recipe. What grown-ups have in their keeping is presumably something more than the basic conversancy with people, things and events that children already possess through speech and its understanding. This is why the ultimate form of reply to the child is generally: "Wait until you're older." More substantial replies exhibit no more command of language than the child's question—like the Mad Hatter's remark, they are "certainly English"—and their failure to satisfy can be frustrating on both sides.

Alice's first question is relevant to this issue in that books without pictures or conversations are particular features of that version of human culture from which she, as a child, is excluded, making up the bulk of the higher or "approved" part of it: if Alice is about to drift into sleep, her sister is already lost in her own dream of self-improvement. Questions about the value of such books are usually answered by saying that they contain some essential instruction, but this can account only for choice of one book over another; it does not explain bookishness in general, the habit of entering into dialogue with the written word for reasons other than diversion. Since there are cultures that do not absolutely hinge ideals of maturity upon this practice—Plato, a champion of self-improvement if ever there was one, came down against it—the childish question can be made to carry a point that the child does not necessarily intend. The way Dodgson sets the scene—the sultry day, Alice perfectly willing to be sleepy and stupid, wondering if any pleasure is worth the effort—makes an irony directed at self-improvement accompany the innocence of wonder. There is another joke about self-improvement a few pages on. Alice has just found a bottle labeled "Drink me":

> It was all very well to say "Drink me," but the wise little Alice was not going to do *that* in a hurry. "No, I'll look first," she said, "and see whether it's marked '*poison*' or not": for she had read several nice little

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stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them; such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that, if you cut your finger *very* deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink from a bottle marked 'poison', it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

For all their intellectual play, the Alices are remarkably unsuited to didacticism of any kind, and Dodgson seems to have intended this. "I can guarantee," he wrote later, "that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them—in fact they do not teach anything at all." Culture is certainly transmitted from one generation to the next by making children obedient to rules, but the overriding purpose of this schooling is to habituate them to a form of life, not to instill a particular wisdom. Didacticism tries to sidestep the issues involved by treating maturity as though it were simply a matter of finding things out and overcoming the emotional difficulties that children and nonscientists have in accepting them. The child has the right attitude here: she is patiently curious about the rules, even where the didacticism of the adult world has virtually emptied them of content.

Powerless in the real world, the dreaming child loses her authority over the familiar creatures of play—pets, cards, figures from nursery rhymes, chessmen—by a further diminution of size; this produces a feeling of defenselessness that occasionally makes Alice cry but is not finally terrifying. ("What fun!" chuckles the Gryphon. "It's all her fancy that: they never executes anybody, you know.") Whatever its aspect of bluster, the adult world in the books clearly means her no harm, and even submits at times to her management. What produces the appearance of authority is Alice's eagerness to learn—always happy, as Dodgson says of her, to find out some new sort of rule—and the dreamlike failure of her usual rituals for asserting herself when urged by the creatures to "remember who she is" (a pun collapsing personal identity and social status). The hint is clear that the condition will pass away with the dream, the way grown-up authority over her will pass

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away in real life when she gets to full size. We can paraphrase as follows: "The power of grown-ups is like the power of dreams, illogical and transitory."

The dreamlike appearance of authority is worked out in the books by having Alice try to recall who she is through the recital of nursery lessons; the point of the joke is that in reality these are the means through which the grown-up world insinuates its authority over her, so that the attempt to use them in the dream as a source of resistance is already self-defeating. The effect can be frightening at times:

> "That's different from what I used to say as a child," said the Gryphon.
>
> "Well, *I* never heard it before," said the Mock Turtle; "but it sounds uncommon nonsense."
>
> Alice said nothing; she had sat down with her face in her hands, wondering if anything would *ever* happen in a natural way again.

Since the grown-ups have no sensible rules to offer, the recitations turn out to be militantly antididactic parodies, and the joke turns against the grown-ups too. The Gryphon and the Turtle are a pair of Oxford alumni wondering at the strange stuff taught nowadays at school, but the dialogue is also a representation of what children must often hear when they garble their lessons. Once you accept grown-up authority, you forsake natural identity and nothing ever happens in a natural way again.

Alice is put through her paces on command at such moments, and it is appropriate to the dream-mechanism that she remain unaware, as her younger readers do not, of the power her superior sort of nonsense has in putting grown-ups in their place; the child may be spellbound in the dream of grown-up authority, but it is her dream, after all, and the creatures have only the life she gives them, so real coerciveness is out of the question; there is simply no point in making an uncomfortable sort of issue about it, turning the dream to nightmare and trying to wake up. Life is a dream because the fundamental oddity of things cannot be answered, but it is interesting to childish intelligences on this account, and the wish does not arise to have the balance of the

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dream unsettled. Generally, the dismay that the situation might otherwise generate is permitted to work itself out in the exercise of detached curiosity; the creatures are so thoroughly the victims of their own absurdity that Alice can move among them with the evenhanded curiosity of a visitor to a foreign land, submissive to local ordinances but largely uninvolved in what she sees. The episode of the Red King, in which it is suggested that it is not Alice but someone else whose powers are temporarily spellbound, very nearly marks an exception:

> "If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"
>
> "I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if *I'm* only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, I should like to know?"
>
> "Ditto," said Tweedledum.
>
> "Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.
>
> He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn't help saying, "Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

The adult figures in the books do not have the child's equanimity of temper; in one way or another, they are forever confronting the child with her lack of reality. The accusation of being a dream-creature is distinctly a snub; going out like a candle is just the sort of behavior expected of low types. Each hugging and squeezing his mirror image, the brothers stand for solipsism and the self-induced isolation of pride that lies behind it; but since there is nobody in the solipsist's world worth speaking to, they must lower themselves to Alice's level to get the pleasure of insulting her. ("What the solipsist intends is quite correct," writes Wittgenstein, "only it cannot be said.") Alice is able to recover herself on this occasion by reflecting on the nonsense of the solipsist's position.

Insofar as the creatures stand for grown-ups, accommodating to their behavior is like divining the answer to a puzzle; this is the continuing point of the joke about them:

> "What a funny watch!" she remarked. "It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!"

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"Why should it?" muttered the Hatter. "Does *your* watch tell you what year it is?"

"Of course not," Alice replied very readily: "but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together."

"Which is just the case with *mine*," said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English.

The riddle about the raven and the writing desk has no answer in particular, but this one has; we subsequently learn that Time has been keeping things at six o'clock in revenge for abuses, so that the creatures are perpetually at tea. Finding the solution does nothing, of course, to dispel the fundamental oddity, but the creatures can always appeal to some regular usage of speech—in this case, "*making* time pass"—in defiance of context, as if one were being particularly responsible in treating the form of words as an absolute. Most of the puzzling bits of behavior depend upon latent puns or equivocations of this kind. Even where no puzzle is involved, Dodgson sometimes works in a pun for good measure—the rabbit's sending in a little bill is one instance, the discomfiting of Alice after the caucus-race is another. The connection between puzzles and puns is particularly clear in the answer ("Poe wrote on both") that some readers felt the Hatter might have supplied to the writing-desk riddle; the link is not always so direct, but both depend on getting us to take something one way when the context really calls for taking it another, and falling in with social behavior in the real world is largely a matter of learning to read contexts right. The Gnat, the only creature in the books who is not deliberately opposed to her, and who is also not childish, keeps urging Alice to bridge the gap in age between them by making puns herself; and the puns it makes turn out to be sound pieces of naturalism about its own form of life.

If the behavior of the Gnat is anything to go upon, the knowledge born of conversancy with puns is not of a pleasant kind; sighing heavily at each pun it makes, the way those who listen to puns do in real life, it finally "expires" of one, or, rather, as the text has it, in *style indirect libre,* really sighs itself away, although Alice, innocent of puns to the last, does not understand what has

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happened. The deadly pun comes at the end of a discussion about losing one's name, which could mean marriage or acquiring the wrong sort of reputation, but the thematic material shifted out of context in most of Dodgson's puns is not meant to pertain to sexuality so much as to maturity and age. The knowledge under which the Gnat is laboring is probably that of its distance from childhood, which finally kills it; the pathos of the episode lies in the insignificance of the event to the child, for whom death is not an overbearing reality.

In the preface to his *Pillow Problems,* Dodgson spoke of "unholy thoughts" that come unbidden to the mind addressing itself to sleep, "which torture, with their hateful presence, the fancy that would fain be pure," but it is not clear that he had sexual thoughts in mind. His interest in dreams, which his diaries show to have been continuous and lively, was sustained by curiosity in their associative mechanisms rather than by the hope that a single, omnipresent secret would reveal itself. The Freudian unconscious shifts material to the wrong context to keep the nature of an overmastering concern from view, but the various shifts in Alice are not each meant to be hiding something in particular. The point of the puzzles is rather the general incoherence of the very adult topics they touch upon; the book's concern with growing up frequently lets in associations with sexuality, but if the stridency of the creatures makes them seem obsessive, it is only because they want growing older to mean something.

And this, of course, it never does; the real secret, oppressive enough to the aging, is that nothing lies hidden. The creatures run a gamut of responses to this in relation to the child. At one extreme is the White Knight, who never ceases to hope that some use will be found for things of human creation, although the intention behind them, even to the child's eyes, is muddled and contradictory. The Knight is the only fit guardian for the child in the book, preserving her innocence of intellect right up to the last step before maturity; it is appropriate that among those who feel the unimaginable hand of time, he alone is permitted a valedictory from the child, although he has to ask for it and offer assurances that he will not prolong the parting.

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"I shan't be long. You'll wait and wave your handkerchief when I get to that turn in the road? I think it'll encourage me, you see."

"Of course I'll wait," said Alice: "and thank you very much for coming so far—and for the song—I liked it very much."

"I hope so," the Knight said doubtfully: "but you didn't cry as much as I thought you would."

The song is about the Knight's endurance, and evidently he would like some sympathy for the occasion of it, which is life itself; the appeal is made indirectly, through the medium of a fantasy, so the Knight has not really traduced his custodial function. The song is a parody of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," the only one in the books not based on materials with which the child could be expected to be familiar, and turns like the original on the failure of the poet to keep track of answers to questions about bearing up in despondency. In Wordsworth's poem, the distraction is part of the despondency itself, which is very self-involved, and I think that Wordsworth means to be valuing it, for it is the mood itself, with its inexplicable suddenness, that keeps him from focusing on what is said and so lets him transform the homely instance of the old man's patience into an indistinct figure of general redemption. The parody mocks this by making the old man too silly to be worth attention and by having the Knight's distraction proceed from the intransigence of his preoccupation with lunatic schemes to better the human condition. At the end, the memory of the encounter is not a source of metaphysical solace, as in the original, but a reminder of all the minor annoyances that men of purpose have to put up with.

The point of the parody is not entirely clear; it is hard to believe that children were supposed to delight in it, the way they can with the Isaac Watts parodies, for the mood and substance of the original are really beyond the nursery. But part of the target is certainly the mythic quality that Wordsworth gave his own despair, which Dodgson felt blew up the significance of human life beyond proportion, and the indirect presence of the original mood, which concerns the waste of human efforts, suits the elegiac feeling of the chapter. Wordsworth was too important a figure in the cult of childhood to be kept out of the books altogether; the White

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Knight is his antitype, busy with schemes that keep him from self-involvement and yet able to bear their failure because he knows that human ingenuity, the sheer energy of inventiveness, is its own value.

"Now the cleverest thing of the sort that I ever did," he went on after a pause, "was inventing a new pudding during the meat-course."

"In time to have it cooked for the next course?" said Alice. "Well, that *was* quick work, certainly!"

"Well, not the *next* course," the Knight said in a slow thoughtful tone: "no, certainly not the next *course*."

"Then it would have to be the next day. I suppose you wouldn't have two pudding-courses in one dinner?"

"Well, not the *next* day," the Knight repeated as before: "not the next *day*. In fact," he went on, holding his head down, and his voice getting lower and lower, "I don't believe that pudding ever *was* cooked! In fact, I don't believe that pudding ever will be cooked! And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent."

The shift in emphasis (from *next* to *course,* and so on) implies the insufficiency of each successive time-scheme to the proof of the pudding; the pudding opens unimaginable vistas of history. The significance of each generation's labors can never be realized by any of its successors; one has to accept that life is unredeemed by time and not go begging its meaning from myths about progress and the future.

The Knight, with his gentle face and mild eyes, his self-imposed duty to go no further than the edge of maturity, and his need for only passing sympathy as he turns back into the shadows of the forest, makes an ideal figure of the grown-up as Dodgson conceives it. He is intellectually childish, because adults know nothing to distinguish them from children, but emotionally he is without either the petulance or the complacency that leads most of the other creatures to bully or exploit the child. At the other extreme, I would put the creatures at the Mad Tea Party. They begin by trying to deny the child any place at the table, are more impatient at her interruptions than anyone else in the book, mock her interest in riddles, and hint at the presence of real mysteries to which the childish intelligence is unsuitable.

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"Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

"No, I give up," Alice replied. "What's the answer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.

"Nor I," said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

The child is very forward in this exchange; her pert reply might have been directed against Dodgson himself. But impoliteness is justified here by the creatures' extreme rudeness. Since the child had no need to insist that life amount to something, being relatively untouched by age, she functions as the critical intelligence in the book, and the Hatter and Hare find it necessary to put her down. (As for the Dormouse, Dodgson used to pretend to fall asleep in the middle of his stories, giving his audience the pleasure of poking him awake, but the Dormouse is really trying to shut things out, and Dodgson would have been incapable of responding to the child's challenge with: "If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself.") Grown-ups have no choice about wasting time; those who cannot admit this find it important to talk about managing time and insist upon the existence of more important things than riddles. The Hatter's boast—that he knows time—is outwardly correct, since he is grown up, but his acquaintanceship proves servile and petitioning. The tea that the creatures are forced to be at forever is not High Tea, which was just coming in, but the child's supper; everyone is secretly condemned to remain in some way at the childish level, but the churlishness that the creatures show the child here finds its appropriate punishment in their having to live forever in the mess of the child's mealtime, while taking no pleasure in the conversation at table.

Because she is the most even-tempered, the least self-concerned, the child is the most sensibly behaved person in the books; for the same reasons she has the best manners. The nature of this ideal and Dodgson's evident identification with it in his private life have been the occasions for directing a certain amount of clinical atten-

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tion to the story. But if the Alices present a desperately incomplete image of childhood, the same can be said for any literary presentation of character; the deliberate enabling of attitudes and responses where they are implausible is simply part of the conventions of fiction. The real question is the use to which the conventions are put, which is here to shed an ironic light on the projects of maturity; the child's complacency, born of the dream, is a touchstone of disinterested curiosity, not a model for imitation. The idea of really envying the child's condition seems to be hit off in the Mock Turtle, who has suffered an incomprehensible, disfiguring transformation upon leaving childhood behind ("Once," said the Mock Turtle at last, with a deep sigh, "I was a real Turtle."), cannot get past the episodes of childhood whenever he tells his history, and is last heard singing mournfully of the consummation that might have been, had he been able to keep his original form. Dodgson actually spoke of sexual development as disfiguring and this gets the idea into the book, true enough, but not in a way that allows for indulgence; there is altogether too much self-knowledge here to permit argument from the personal failures of Dodgson to the controlled achievement of the books.

The Alice of the books is an ideal figure, but not in the sense that Wordsworth's pygmy darlings are ideals. For the romantic poets, the child was important because its sensibility had not been corrupted by the meddling intellect; it was close to the dawn of life, the hiding places of man's power, and was supposed to experience the natural fitness of things to human life, which adults have to reason out and see by glimpses, if at all. The myth is still very powerful and escapes rebuke at the hands of our experience of real children because it places certain feelings of self-pity in the service of resignation, at once ratifying the sense of nameless loss or disaffection while making it irredeemable, and doing this much as the myth of Eden did, but without the religious associations. Whole books have been written to argue whether the child in the romantic image is finally put wrong by a particular kind of civilization or simply by the onset of maturity; it is probably safest to say that the myth, like its Edenic counterpart, can serve either radical or conservative tendencies when put to political uses, depending on

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which poet you are reading. In Wordsworth, who is obviously the major source, it works best confronting childhood from a distance, for it is the image of loss that counts, not the actualities of childish sensibility; when Wordsworth gets up close to children, his need to authenticate the mystery proves an embarrassment.

"Now tell me, had you rather be,"
I said, and took him by the arm
"On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?"

In careless mood he looked at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, "At Kilve I'd rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm."

"Now, little Edward, say why so:
My little Edward, tell me why,"—
"I cannot tell, I do not know,"
"Why, this is strange," said I;

At this my boy hung down his head,
He blushed with shame, nor made reply;
And three times to the child I said,
"Why, Edward, tell me why?"

Wordsworth is alert to the aggressiveness of his approach to childhood, which springs from dependency, and makes the child's independence, in fact, the point of the poem, but he accepts the dependency as something valuable at the end and this makes him oblivious to the silliness of his whole posture. One cannot help feeling that the child's ultimate reply, which the poet takes as a signal of its unfathomable sensibility, beyond the power of speech, is made simply to pacify the old fool and escape a bruised arm. The situation is much closer to that of the Alices than "Resolution and Independence" but the poem is already too near self-parody to be worth taking down.

In either of its forms (radical or conservative), Dodgson will have no truck with a resignation that must continually base itself

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on self-pity: grown-ups have no business seeking solace from children, or even from images of childhood, and if they do, the result is always oppressive. The Alice of the books is not meant to solace anyone, quite the reverse, in fact (although she is permitted to give the Wordsworthian figure of the White Knight a little encouragement), and the opposition between her and the grown-ups cannot be figured in terms of sensibility versus intellect. If the child feels its life in every limb, this is not because its mind works any differently, but because it is young; for the same reason, it is not desperate that things make sense, although it wants them to, and this is sufficient to oppose it to the adult figures, who have to insist on intelligibility.

The simple fact about Alice is that she has not lived long enough to worry about things adding up, and her curiosity (an intellectual quality, not a matter of sensibility) carries her lightly along on the current of time. She thinks like adults but without their anxieties, and the idealization lies not in its mythic qualities but in its resolute one-sidedness, which ignores the darker, ambitious motives that shade the intellectual character of children in reality. Her qualities are most deliberately on view in the Wool-and-Water Shop, which is Oxford, the higher learning, and civilization, all rolled into one. Things flow about, but the grown-up intellect has to pretend that they can be valued and ticketed, although what you are looking for is always on the next shelf above the one you are looking at, and will even go through the ceiling "as if it were quite used to it." The child, too, sees only by glimpses but is undismayed by this, unlike adults, because she is temperamentally attuned to the fact that nothing stands still.

This is not to say that she is somehow closer to nature.* Among Dodgson's contemporaries, the idea of nature often mingled a pro-

* Empson's essay on the Alices is still the best, but I cannot agree with him when he writes, of the Romantics, "Their idea of the child, that it is in the right relation to Nature, not dividing what should be unified, that its intuitive judgment contains what poetry and philosophy must spend their time labouring to recover, was accepted by Dodgson and a main part of his feeling." Further, the dance she enters into with Tweedledum and Tweedledee (to the tune of "Here we go round the mulberry bush") seems to me not the cycle of Wordsworthian nature but pretty clearly the self-enclosed circle of culture. In picking quarrels of this sort with a critic to whom one has reasons to be grateful, it is best to keep to footnotes.

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test against civilization ("what man has done to man") with beliefs in science and human perfectibility. Nature was the home of all continuities; she oversaw the progress of intellect in individual and species alike, shaping it to logical order by her consistencies, and never would betray the mind that loved her. The Alices have few traces of this mixture. Nature is at all points immensely remote from intellectual life in the books; a feeling for some primal state of things plays about but does not enter their focus, save in the Wood with No Names, where it is clearly antecedent to the human journey, rather than a possible habitation. As in Rousseau, a source for much of this feeling, nature has been left behind once mankind develops speech, and there is no way back. Culture means madness, a possible depravity of nature, but it is the only destiny for the child, whose constant liability to confusions at the hands of the creatures' arguments shows her to be at least potentially as mad as they. ("We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.")

The mad world of the books is the world of culture, with its radical discontinuities; anyone who enters it has lost the community of nature, although the common possession of speech makes one imagine otherwise. Alice can recognize its oddities because in her own way she knows what the ability to speak presupposes—namely, how to distinguish consistency from inconsistency by attending to context in the use of terms. But the common possession of this ability, and the logical sense that goes with it, is not enough to establish common sense in the world of culture. The grown-up figures in the books fail to realize this and act as if the child can perfectly well understand if she wants to. If they are mocked, it is not because they are madder than she, but because they get so intensely logical about the normative character of their eccentricities.

The world supposed by logic must be something very like the Wood with No Names, the world as it appears to minds innocent of any communal practice but speech itself. The particulars of such a world can be identified, differentiated, given location and recognized as animate or inanimate, capable or incapable of speech; but they contain nothing to indicate what their various dispositions add up to, because they are not identified or differentiated, even

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indirectly, by reference to any particular community of purpose. When Professor Strawson proposes (in *Individuals*) to lay bare the "massive central core of human thinking which has no history . . . categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all," and which, therefore, *any* form of speech expresses, the common world that logic supposes is revealed as one containing material bodies, persons, events and very little else. Its objects have no names because, as Alice observes, things get their names "because it's useful to the people that name them" (she immediately considers how useful it would be for children if they had no names that grown-ups could use), and a purely logical world is abstracted from all particularity of usage. Any material world supposed by culture is eccentric in its departure from this one, and the appeal to logic alone cannot resolve all difficulties in its elucidation. "Logic," cries Achilles to the Tortoise, "will take you by the throat and *force* you to agree!" But logic has no such power; to the extent that speech involves reference to practice, it teases mankind with the ideal of fundamental community, which it exalts even as it traduces.

If there is a virtue about childhood for Dodgson, it lies here: in the child's intellectual good manners, her unflagging, disinterested curiosity, her willingness to entertain the paradoxes of grown-ups without belaboring them in the name of her own. If the real world recognizes it as politeness to let eccentricity sometimes pass unnoticed, sociability is quite basically founded in the books upon accepting the wholesale equivocation of all conduct. The famous "Jabberwocky" that opens the second book points the moral of this: the normal words in the poem furnish something like the fictive equivalent to the logical structure of an argument, in relation to which the neologisms are left free to take on whatever meanings their associations suggest to any reader. Here again the child shows decent humility of spirit: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't know exactly what they are!" It is no wonder that Alice became a patron saint of surrealism. Her response contrasts with the arrogance of Humpty Dumpty, who insists on settling what counts as an acceptable equivalence, unpacking the portmanteau of language. J. B. Priestley saw Humpty Dumpty as a

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parody of academic criticism; certainly he is the pride that goes before a fall, and his association of glory with a nice, knockdown argument is central to his character. "The question is," in his view, "which is to be master—that's all." The real use of logic is to locate errors of argument *within* the framework of a practice. The creatures' use of it shows that logic has become a weapon enforcing one practice against another. Humpty Dumpty is the patron saint of logicians.*

If it is discourtesy to make other people's equivocations explicit, logicians are the most impolite people alive. "It seems," wrote Pascal, "that their license must be without any limits or barriers, since they have broken through so many that are so just and so sacred." Since logic represents the most general principles to which speech must conform, it ought to be what Jowett said it was—a harmless dodge, a way of forestalling the distractions of subject matter by getting formal mechanisms to locate the point where fallacies (which exist, Dodgson advised younger readers, "even in sermons") creep into argument. Unhappily, the life of everyday speech is profoundly unsuited to its application. No culture is all of a piece; each of its enterprises sustains a host of unconsidered, possibly conflicting assumptions as background to its main concerns, and since these may vary immensely, the members of any culture have to tolerate very different emphases upon contradiction as they move among them. Everyday speech is the matrix through which the various practices of culture relate to one another; its means of identifying particulars are immeasurably richer than those available in the Wood with No Names, reflecting the variety of cultural practices, but they are also vastly more confusing. "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like," says the Red Queen, "but *I've* heard nonsense compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" This is the logician's reply, who is put out by the number of paradoxes—some of remarkably ancient lineage—that

* R. B. Braithwaite, writing in the *Mathematical Gazette*, 1932, christens him "a logical prophet," but with very different intentions. "Humpty Dumpty must take an honourable place," he writes, "among those who have attempted to free us from the bondage of symbols which are our own creation." For Dodgson, such freedom was impossible and all its prophets were false.

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everyday speech sustains without resolving. The odd life of "common" speech is founded on this tolerance; by the same token, however, the strength of it will make extensive formal developments in logic unlikely, reducing it to what Jowett said it was—a dodge.

Now, as everyone knows, the period contemporary with Dodgson was one in which logic was trying to free itself from this amiable bondage and put itself into the service of the instrumental sciences. This meant intolerance, to begin with, belaboring contradictions that sociable men learn to pass over in silence, as part of the decorum of maturity, and then resolving them in the interests of a particular intellectual concern. The difficulties encountered at the outset reflected the only form in which common speech had hitherto been willing to propound them, namely, as intellectual diversions or amusements, riddles with no answer. Here, for example, is Bertrand Russell's own account of his assault upon a fundamental contradiction barring the alliance of Dodgson's two subjects, logic and mathematics, and of the spiritual crisis attending his initial failure:

> Every morning I would sit down before a blank sheet of paper. Throughout the day, with a brief interval for lunch, I would stare at the blank sheet. Often when evening came it was still empty. . . . It was clear to me that I could not get on without solving the contradictions, and I was determined that no difficulty should turn me aside from the completion of *Principia Mathematica,* but it seemed quite likely that the whole of the rest of my life might be consumed in looking at the blank sheet of paper. What made it the more annoying was that the contradictions were trivial, and that my time was spent in considering matters that seemed unworthy of serious attention.

The feeling of humiliation to which Russell refers arose from seeing a lifetime's work come suddenly into focus upon impediments that no one ought to be taking seriously. "It seemed unworthy of a grown man to spend his time on such trivialities, but what was I to do?" In crisis Russell nearly proved the truth of Yeats's aphorism that the last kiss is given to the void: he let the blank page consume his life for two years, until resolving his difficulties in the so-called theory of types. The possibility of further contradiction was not, of course, forefended by Russell's theory:

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the effect was rather to establish the primacy for logic of considerations rooted in the abstract sciences over a host of equivocations amiably sustained in the course of social life. The solution was thus a kind of triumph over the mental habits appropriate to general sociability; the trivial puzzles echoed by Russell's contradiction were not made profound by his work but dispelled forever, and with them the habits of intellectual courtesy that kept them going.

It is difficult to see how a logician could fail to regard this as progress. "What we have in each case," writes J. F. Thomson of the puzzles, "is a method of argument, and then that method put to paradoxical and frivolous purpose. . . . For what is there to be puzzled about? In each case, it is relatively easy to see what the relevant argument is, and to assure oneself that it is valid." As a logician, Dodgson's bias seems to have run another way; putting methods of argument to the formation of paradox was not frivolous but an essential diversion. Far more assiduous in devising formal schematisms than he has usually been given credit for, he seems to have tried to grasp the principle of equivocation in order to generate puzzles and amusements rather than to proscribe them. In his lifetime, Dodgson published two notes on logic in the professional journal *Mind* and an introductory effort, which bore the title *Symbolic Logic: Part I, Elementary,* but the consensus seems to be that these are more provoking than profound; there is general agreement that as a logician, Dodgson was too occupied with the surface play of contradiction to make serious accomplishment likely. One should add, however, that Dodgson may not have shared the usual ambitions of the logician, or even approved of them. Dodgson moved to formalism as a way of habituating discourse to equivocation and so to make possible the necessary acceptance of paradox at the root of mankind's general sociability. (That is why his formalisms seem inconsequential to contemporary logicians; they short-circuit the aim of formal logic.) Not everybody experiences such confusions as fun: there is record of at least one child who could not stand Dodgson's puzzles and had to be led, screaming, from the table. Taking his letters as evidence, there seems to have been as much seriousness in this effort as there was

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behind the more imposing work of Pascal; the result was apparently also meant to support the feeling that "life is a dream a little less inconstant" and to make a space for religion. No doubt the comparison is not exactly to Dodgson's advantage, but it may suggest how much Pascal's genius worked out of an unquestioned confidence in the power of mankind to live informally with symbols, which Dodgson could not take for granted. Denied—for one reason or another—appeal to a lively, inward sense of the specific paradoxes of Christianity, Dodgson had to elevate puzzlement to the rank of a spiritual exercise—the tendency of intellect to show itself up as ready partner to equivocation.

The chess puzzle underlying *Through the Looking-Glass* is an apt figure for embodying what were probably Dodgson's views about the continuities underlying cultural life. As A. L. Taylor has observed, the model for what happens on the board is not a chess problem at all, but a chess lesson, in which one side is given a license to willfulness in order to provide illustrations of the rules and the other side is generously allowed to win. The various powers of the pieces are translated into aspects of character whose animating motives have nothing to do with the intelligibility of the action as a whole. As the creatures fulfill the nursery rhymes, so they accomplish the purpose of the lesson; the moves confronting the child seem perfectly episodic, while those of the pawn, obversely, display mechanical adherence to the simplest of all rules. Nothing illustrates a coherent strategy; and yet the principles of chess strategies are supposed at every point, for the whole is a better device for communicating the rules of chess than a real game would be. We may paraphrase as follows: "It does not matter that grown-ups are madly willful or that the rule-governed child is confronted by an incoherent set of activities; the possibility of reasonable behavior can be faithfully transmitted even where no one acts reasonably."

The view that grown-up activity makes sense insofar as it transmits principles, but makes no coherent use of them, that the behavior of grown-ups has no *other* point, whatever they think about it, than to train the next generation to take their place, and so on, ad infinitum—is probably too deeply conservative for most grown-ups

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to swallow. But it is not the childish view of things either; we recall that Alice was surprised at the end of the Red Queen's race to discover that they were under the same tree the whole time. The child's ambition is to become a grown-up, with all the lateral and diagonal flexibility of motion denied to pawns; it imagines that the life of adults beyond their relationship to children (just out of sight, as it were, the way things are just out of sight in a mirror) is some kind of consummation, all feasting and fun. The hope of the child in learning the rules is not to imitate the hectoring aggressiveness or fuddled eccentricity of the creatures, but to enact the possibilities latent in both for a genuine rule-observant strategy, a move in a real game. But the hope is inevitably defrauded, for the circumstances of the lesson ensure that a coherent move, one that is neither willfully eccentric nor compulsively obedient to rule, never gets made. To look at a mathematical proof, Poincaré somewhere remarks, only by verifying each consecutive step, is like watching a game of chess and noting only that each move does not violate a rule; the least that understanding requires is to grasp the sequence as a purposeful procedure. In the Alices, this requirement is never met; at the end of each book, when the child can move at will, the dream turns to nightmare and she wakes up. The moral imagination seems incapable of more than an umpiring procedure, like Poincaré's idiot mathematician; it can tell when rules have been broken, but its ideas of consecutive purpose are sheer lunacy.

One of the earliest of Dodgson's poems, written at the age of thirteen, seems to anticipate this subject.

I have a fairy by my side
    Which says I must not sleep.
When once in pain I loudly cried
    It said "You must not weep."

If, full of mirth, I smile and grin,
    It says, "You must not laugh";
When once I wished to drink some gin
    It said "You must not quaff."

When once a meal I wished to taste
    It said "You must not bite";

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When to the wars I went in haste
It said "You must not fight."

"What may I do?" at length I cried,
Tired of the painful task.
The fairy quietly replied,
And said, "You must not ask."

Moral: "You musn't."

This tiresome fairy, as Dodgson's biographer remarks, seems to have kept in touch with him all his life. Of course, most bores can be endured, provided one keeps his own end of the conversation lively. Perhaps we can admit this much of innocence to the child: endlessly curious, she continues to hope that the moral imagination will say something sensible.

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MEMOIRS

The Members of the Board

From *Words & Faces*

HIRAM HAYDN

Shortly before his death last December, Hiram Haydn finished writing Words & Faces, *which Harcourt Brace Jovanovich will publish this month. A chronicle of his years in the world of publishing (Mr. Haydn was also well known as a writer and a teacher),* Words & Faces *includes a chapter about various members of* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR*'s editorial board. These excerpts from that chapter begin in 1944 when Mr. Haydn became editor of the* SCHOLAR*—a post that he held for almost thirty years.*

At that time the board was composed of Ruth Benedict, Henry Steele Commager, Irwin Edman, Christian Gauss, Henry Hazlitt, Will D. Howe, James M. Landis, Burton Livingston, John W. Nason, William Allan Neilson, Harlow Shapley and Irita Van Doren. Miss Benedict and Mr. Landis were not present at my first meeting: I never did meet them. But the others were articulately, vigorously present.

The talk! Marjorie Nicolson thought of those days as a return to the Mermaid Tavern. Perhaps, though to me it was of another order, closer to the Socratic dialogues, yet more mundane, with talk about elections and conservation and megatons as well as essences and light years.

At this initial meeting I made another new friend in Irita Van Doren, who was our first lady until her death in 1966. Irita comes close to defying description. Her graciousness was unmistakably innate, not simply bred. It came from some well of sweetness (that is the word Jacques Barzun stressed, in his tribute to her in the summer issue of 1967, dissociating it completely from its saccharine substitute) deep within her. She bloomed rosily with affection, was our belle as well as our hostess. The gallant older men of my original board attended her like Castiglione's courtiers. Neilson and Gauss were her then favorites, and I remember the night, after his third or fourth meeting, when Guy Stanton Ford (historian and former president of the University of Minnesota) approached her in a courtly fashion and asked whether he was too new a member to be kissed good night, as were those other two. (And that was only twenty-five years ago!)

Irita was also our peacemaker. It much disturbed her that Jacques Barzun and I regularly addressed a few tart words to each other at our gatherings; she would chide us gently, and she was obviously happy when, as we grew older, we came to a better understanding of each other. I remember, too, that when a disaffection developed between Miss Nicolson and me, Irita had us both to dinner in a vain attempt to heal the breach.

In 1946, when Miss Nicolson yielded the presidency of the Society to Gauss, we elected her back to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR as a regular member of the editorial board. But eight of that earlier board were gone by now, and she did not find the new members as congenial. She accused me of "selling out and going downtown," by which she meant balancing the members in academic life with others from "the other world." For her the Mermaid Tavern had

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been replaced by an inferior alehouse. When I replied by pointing to men like Barzun and Irwin Edman, she waved my argument aside. "They're not real scholars," she said scornfully; "they write for the outside world."

So Irita brought us together for another try, but Miss Nicolson remained unmoved. I can, in retrospect, see her point of view more clearly. Although in Hazlitt, Howe and Landis the earlier board had journalists and men of affairs, it was heavily weighted with people in academic life—scholars and administrators. I was young, new to New York, and excited by the "great world"; I was also, and (at thirty-six) belatedly, an active liberal, joining some of the organizations of the time and seeking for "my" magazine a more vigorous liberal position. For me "her" board was too much like the Phi Beta Kappa senators; for her, "mine" was composed of unscholarly downtown elements.

At the Senate meeting of 1944, the terms of four "old" members expired, and I nominated, to replace them, R. L. Duffus of the *New York Times,* Max Lerner, Paul Robeson and Sumner Welles. After the nominations were duly, if warily, approved by the Senate, Will Howe said to me with a glee that did not come from his political convictions, "Wow, four new members. Two Communists and two fellow travelers! The party will take over Phi Beta Kappa."

Perhaps his elation was of the order of, "Oh, boy, now are we going to have trouble!" At any rate, it was neither a sober nor accurate statement. Max Lerner was never a Communist; Duffus was a moderate liberal whose tutelary deity was Veblen, not Marx; and Sumner Welles was a career diplomat of Rooseveltian persuasion, recently retired as undersecretary of state. Robeson alone was Communist, at that point not yet embittered about America. This was the time of the alliance with the Soviet; the prevailing winds were favorable to cohabitation, or at least mutual tolerance.

Yet there was quite a stir at the appearance of Robeson's name on our masthead. During the three years of his term on the board, I received hundreds of indignant letters, many demanding his removal. Most of these came from members of Phi Beta Kappa in the politically conservative regions of the country. They alarmed Miss Nicolson, but when Christian Gauss became president, I felt I had firm support. "He was duly nominated by the SCHOLAR and elected by the Senate of Phi Beta Kappa. We have nothing to be ashamed of or afraid of. Just ride it out."

An ironic aspect of the situation was that Robeson never attended a meeting of the board. He wrote one editorial and read several manuscripts; these were his total contribution. I did have one long talk with him, during which he promised to come to meetings, but he was too involved in politics and civil rights to keep the promise. I shall never, however, forget that one encounter. He seemed to me as big a person as he was a physical being: open "to a fault," generous, passionate and courteous. I had seen him in *Othello* only a few weeks before; I was struck by the appropriateness of the role for him.

Paul Robeson was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, but some of the new members of the next few years were not. When I first came to the national office, one of the odd things I discovered concerned the constituency of the Senate. At that time all senators were, of course, members of the Society, as were the members of the SCHOLAR's board. But of the twenty-eight current senators only six had been elected in undergraduate days; all the others had become *honorary* members later!

I used these figures as part of my plea to permit the election to the board of people who were not affiliated with Phi Beta Kappa at all; as a clincher, I pointed to the fact that under the existing rules, a man like Reinhold Niebuhr could not be elected to the board! My amendment carried, and before long we didn't even know which of our members were also Phi Beta Kappas. . . .

*

In time, I came to realize that the most extraordinary man of the whole group was

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Harlow Shapley, the Harvard astronomer. It was Shapley whose *Studies Based on the Colors and Magnitudes in Stellar Clusters,* singlehanded, changed the position of our sun. To put it accurately, until the publication (1915-21) of this series of nineteen papers, astronomers were in general agreement that our sun was a star close to the center of our Milky Way system. Working with the great telescopes of Mount Wilson Observatory, Shapley, still a young man, was able to convince all colleagues that our sun was at a distance of thirty thousand light years or more from the galactic center. And later, at Harvard, Shapley and his associates did valuable work in the study of variable stars and the distribution of the galaxies.

Possessed of enormous energy, Harlow did not find these activities sufficient to fill his time and mind. Religion had always fascinated him—and troubled him. He scornfully rejected the limited sectarian variety, but the Holy Ghost haunted him. Although he was given to speak of God as "Nature with a capital *N*," I do not believe that this definition was capable of the exorcism he wanted it to perform. In later life he was always on the search for some reconciliation between science and religion, and even much earlier, in the forties, he would frequently suggest for an article a topic involving some aspect of religion.

A memorable incident related to this preoccupation occurred at a SCHOLAR board meeting held in '48 or '49. Early on, during cocktails, Harlow and Reinhold Niebuhr debated hotly the question of whether there was such a thing as Truth, or only truths. This conversation began casually, gained intensity as we went in to dinner, and continued throughout, and after, the meal. The rest of us realized that we were present at one of the great confrontations and were silent. Only Max Lerner dared to interrupt, and he only once. Plato and Aristotle, Arnold and Huxley, Niebuhr and Shapley.

Would that we had a tape recording of that encounter: two rapier-like minds, passionately but courteously dueling. At last, spent, they faced each other in silence; there was on each face an expression of understanding and affection. It came to me that each, in the manner of Yeats's Hic and Ille, had been opposing his other self throughout: Niebuhr, his keen intellectual skepticism; Shapley, his yearning for a tenable mystical faith.

I adjourned the meeting; we had never discussed the affairs of the magazine. . . .

*

This association with Harlow also nudged me into action on the political and social front. Faced with his dedicated activism, I felt ashamed of my some fifteen years of nonparticipation. He proposed that I join the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, of which he was president. It was an organization primarily devoted to keeping Franklin Roosevelt in office (this was the election year of 1944), and it was, in the fashion of the day, a coalition of idealists, artists, liberals, Socialists, Communists and fellow travelers.

I accepted, and Harlow appointed me to several committees. Before long, I began to lose some of my naïveté about political convictions, tactics and strategies. It became clear to me that there were two languages employed in these groups: one that depended for communication on a vocabulary standardized and defined by some invisible book of rules, and the other the familiar one of individuals speaking each for himself, in an idiom of his own, with the familiar resulting difficulty in being sure one knew exactly what another was saying.

The first of these two languages was very efficient to anyone versed in it; even when metaphor was intended, there was unmistakably a central American-Marxist clearinghouse of terms to which the informed could refer. The second was ragged, individualistic, quite inefficient—and had all my loyalty.

Roosevelt re-elected, the NCASP slowly slipped from public view, many of its members re-forming their patterns in new groups with ostensible other goals. I say "ostensible" because in time it became clear to me that there was a central "establish-

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ment," Communist-oriented, which might have no formal structure, but whose members initiated or infiltrated each new liberal cause. And of these all but one—Harlow Shapley—spoke the first of my two languages.

Let me illustrate the point with two experiences. Still zealous, however wary, I joined a new group called the New York Society to Win the Peace. I was impressed with its listing of affiliated organizations, endorsing its general goal. They ranged from the American Association of University Women to the Communist Party, U.S.A. This, I reasoned, was the way it should be—open and honest. This group would not be dominated by the Party, since it was only one of many "backers." On the other hand, the inclusion of the C.P. was right in the struggle for peace: it represented in microcosm the United States' relation to Soviet Russia.

The executive secretary of the New York Society was an attractive young man whose real name, I learned later, was not Dan Wells. Big, blond, amiable, he looked ripe for a *Saturday Evening Post* cover—like the outstanding football player he had actually been. We got along very well, and when he proposed to me that I accept the chairmanship of the group, I agreed. I did say that I was willing to do so only with the understanding that the Society was not secretly Communist-dominated, that the actual operation was what its "face" proclaimed it to be. He laughed good-naturedly and reassured me.

My two not very arduous duties as chairman were to conduct our meetings and sign the press releases sent out following actions resolved at those meetings. What continued to make me uneasy was that all these resolutions condemned various actions of the American government or some other American organization. In most cases I believed our charges justified; but, as I once pointed out, the Soviet was doing or saying some of the same things we objected to on the part of our own country. The rejoinder was that it was our job to straighten out our own problems first.

Then came a motion to censure some action of Secretary of State James Byrnes's. The resultant story in the *New York Times* upset me. I had read our news release and signed it. But the article excerpted our statement in such a way as to make me, quoted as chairman, appear to be supporting a straight party line.

Naïve, I was shocked that the great *Times* would so distort a news story. Inexperienced, I was afraid not only that I was getting myself into trouble for a cause that was different in actuality from its profession and from my own convictions, but that this trouble might include the SCHOLAR and hence Phi Beta Kappa. In short, I felt that impulse had led me into irresponsibility. I needed seasoned advice.

I remember dismissing instantly the thought of going to Harlow Shapley. I was sure he would chide me and urge me to continue as chairman. So I turned to Irita Van Doren, who, beginning with my first board meeting, had befriended me, guided me, supported me. Her interest and kindness were extraordinary, and this remained true through the years. And her judgment matched her generosity.

"Do this, Hi," she said. "At the next meeting, yield the chair and move the censure of some recent Soviet action. That will be a real test."

I followed her counsel, not without some apprehensiveness. I stepped down from the chair; I made the motion. After an awesome silence, the substitute chairman asked for a second. Only silence.

I resumed the chair, asked if there was any further business, waited, called for adjournment.

Dan Wells and I faced each other, knowing it was all over. He said defensively that it was not Communist domination when there was a consensus of sincere opinion. I resigned.

That was it, I thought. No more do-gooder organizations. But several years later Harlow Shapley invited me to join the Committee of One Hundred. Its goal was in essence the defeat of Joe McCarthy and all he represented. An executive committee of five or six was being formed to select ninety-four or -five others.

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Members so far were himself, Archibald MacLeish, Van Wyck Brooks, Olin Downes and perhaps one other—if so I have forgotten who. I was flattered at the company I would keep, but I hesitated, then told Harlow about my experience with the New York Society.

"Not the same thing at all," he said with some impatience. "This is totally nonpartisan in nature. We're trying to develop a real grass-roots movement against the new kind of fascism that's cropping up everywhere and threatening intellectual freedom and civil rights. And we want you on your own terms; so come and see for yourself."

That was certainly fair enough. And the first several meetings were earnest and constructive. It was the first time I had met Van Wyck Brooks, and I was much impressed with the simplicity and purity of his face and ideas. I also found MacLeish congenial. We met in Olin Downes's apartment, over the Metropolitan Opera House —a handsome Victorian set of rooms, spacious and high-ceilinged. Downes, the music critic of the *New York Times,* was a sophisticated and genial host.

The plan was to establish connections all over the country with leaders chosen chiefly from education, the arts, sciences and professions—people respected locally, who would take the initiative in organizing groups to oppose the loyalty oaths then infiltrating university and college campuses, the smearing and firing of liberal individuals who had the courage to speak up against the curtailing of honest dissent, and other manifestations of creeping McCarthyism. The movement was to cut across all lines of classification: sexual, ethnic or racial, religious, political, economic. Especially, we were—or seemed to be—in agreement in our emphasis that the group must be totally free of any partisan political connection if it was to be effective and appeal widely. In short, I felt that at last I was just where I belonged, in active support of a cause I cherished.

It was agreed that at our next meeting we would spend the entire time selecting a chairman and the members of the Committee of One Hundred. This done, we would dissolve our committee and become, ourselves, simply five of the one hundred original sponsors.

At this meeting, Harlow Shapley walked in with guests, Lillian Hellman and Jo Davidson, the sculptor. I had met both of them during the NCASP days. Davidson, a hearty, vital man, I liked but really knew only slightly. I had seen more of Miss Hellman, had found her cold, strong, somewhat intimidating. (*Had* is the right tense, for since that time I have come to know her much better, to like and admire her intensely, and to feel her warmth and generosity of spirit.)

Perhaps Harlow had telephoned Olin Downes in advance, but I am sure that the rest of us were not prepared for guests. To be sure, all of us were acquainted, but their appearance seemed, at least to MacLeish and me, an intrusion.

At any rate, the meeting proceeded, but in a wholly new direction. Shapley, backed by his guests, who seemed to be self-elected members of the committee, was pressing now for a lobby in Washington, and presented names of people to consider for a professional staff. (I recognized unhappily several from NCASP days.) It was only in Washington that we could exert direct influence on legislators, he said. He was not abandoning our grass-roots program, but strengthening it in a realistic way.

A recurring experience of mine, and I suppose of many people's, is what I call "no transition." In its most virulent form, a position completely incompatible with that previously held is presented, without the slightest acknowledgment that an about-face has been performed. It is an infuriating experience to anyone trying honestly to grapple with issues and problems of whatever sort. Infuriating—in several ways: the abandonment of logic and coherence, the inevitable implication that much has been going on behind the scene, and the sheer impudence of trying to bluff one's way, with confidence that others will be so taken aback that they will accept the change without comment.

Harlow's reversal was not of that variety;

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he acknowledged our previous direction, but urged us to complement it with another. Yet the new proposal was completely at odds with our agreement about partisan politics: no lobby (at least at that time) could wholly avoid political alignment.

Brooks, MacLeish and I objected on several scores; Harlow and his guests responded with various arguments. At last Downes persuaded us to table the lobby question and move on to the original agenda. Let the Committee of One Hundred decide strategy; our task was to organize *it*.

We proceeded to the consideration of a chairman. I don't remember the others suggested, but shortly I proposed John Dewey for at least honorary chairman, pointing out the confidence his name would inspire throughout the country, the conviction it would bring that we were genuinely nonpartisan.

I shall never forget Lillian Hellman's expression of delighted amusement. I can only guess, of course, but I think her delight had to do with the amateur asking the unaskable question, as a small boy may confound a sophisticated audience.

At any rate, Mr. Dewey was not chosen, and the meeting broke up without decisive action. MacLeish and I descended the great staircase in silence, then faced each other on the pavement.

"I'd like to talk to you," I said.

"I would welcome that. Could you come to my apartment tomorrow afternoon?"

I went, and learned that our experiences had been close to identical. I think that we framed a *joint* letter of resignation, but I am not sure of that. What I am sure of is that I welcomed the chance to know better this distinguished, reticent man who, frequently tortured by doubts and conflicts, spoke out courageously and eloquently against the mounting pressure of conformity and coercion. More about that later.

Harlow's and my friendship inevitably cooled off, but after the '48 election we had a long talk that much surprised me. I had been sure he was a Wallace supporter, but he told me then that he had voted for Truman.

"Occasional streaks of realism in me," he said with the old beguiling grin.

*

In the meantime other departments have appeared, with varying degrees of success.* The first of these, "The American Scholar Forum," has pursued its erratic but occasionally brilliant course over many years. Sometimes we have had no Forum for as long as three years, but eventually it always reappears. People seem to enjoy its "playscript" form, to imagine the assembled company of people of repute, to be moved by some speeches, irritated by others, to have the opportunity themselves to scold, cheer, or "put down" the performers in their own forum, "The Reader Replies."

No other of these Forums attracted such wide attention as one on the New Criticism. Its origin is interesting. Sometime in 1949, Robert Gorham Davis, then of Smith College's English department and later of Columbia's, submitted an article on the fascist roots of the New Criticism, tracing the influence of T. E. Hulme (and through him, Joseph de Maistre) on T. S. Eliot, and Eliot's, in turn, on the other largely American critics and scholars thought of as the New Critics. Hitherto, most references to the so-called New Criticism focused on its methodology in the study of literature, commonly described as *explication de texte,* connoting an exclusive emphasis on the text as the proper subject of study. But in Mr. Davis's persuasively argued essay it was proposed that most of the group shared a common philosophical stance, derived from de Maistre and Hulme, and that this position, extended and applied to social and political matters, could be described accurately as a fascist one.

The article provoked a national uproar. Yvor Winters wired his resignation from Phi Beta Kappa. Scores of poets, critics (whether or not "new") and scholars wrote angry and challenging letters, demanding a retraction, a printed answer, a public

* *Editors' note:* The following is an excerpt from a larger section in which Mr. Haydn describes various special features and departments that have appeared in the SCHOLAR.

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apology—everything and anything short of shutting down the magazine.

I think it was Allen Tate who suggested to me that we bring together a small group of critics who were not demonstrably of "either party" to discuss the article and clear the air. Once Mr. Davis had agreed to this arrangement, Allen also helped me to find appropriate participants. So, on Tuesday evening, August 22, 1950, we assembled at my home at 94 MacDougal Street. Present were Mr. Davis, Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, William Barrett of the *Partisan Review,* and a male stenotypist. I wish I could remember his name, because he came spectacularly into his own late in the evening.

The first to arrive were Cowley and Tate. These distinguished gentlemen were chattering like schoolboys. When I opened the door, they at once began to lament the sad state of affairs: it was Election Day (primaries) and they had been unable to have a drink, had eaten dinner in sad solemnity.

"And so," said Cowley in a lachrymose voice, "do you—perhaps—"

I led them to the kitchen and provided instant fortification.

Next came the stenotypist, a middle-aged, rather gingerly man with the sanctimonious expression of the prototypical undertaker. Tate and Cowley vastly enjoyed greeting him as Mr. Davis—much to the man's bewilderment.

I describe this opening scene because it somehow set the tone for the evening. No one was drunk, but inhibitions were distinctly missing. Cowley and Tate were, in a gentlemanly way, out to get Davis, not because they disliked him, but because they felt his article false in premise and misleading in effect. Barrett was much more tolerant of the article, inclined to be dispassionate. Kenneth Burke, whom I had never met before, seemed to me (and has ever since) not so much an individual human being as an elemental force. In my experience, only Gilbert Seldes could match him for roaring energy.

I found him enormously lovable, but in the discussion, irritating, distracting, the unintentional artificer of a one-man filibuster. He would talk about the nature of hierarchy. Now it was clear to all of us that this subject was not irrelevant to a discussion of fascism, but Mr. Burke was not interested in making the connection; he was poignantly interested in the *nature* of hierarchy. His discourse became more and more remote from our agenda; after a few early references to the Davis essay, he never mentioned it again.

Mr. Davis and I had the most difficult roles. I thought that he defended himself ably for the most part, although he was constantly interrupted by the others. I was determined, as moderator, to enforce fair play, and while I may have failed, it was not for lack of effort. I have recently reread the record in those old issues of the SCHOLAR, and I think my intent is clearly demonstrated, except perhaps toward the end of the discussion when, trying to slow Mr. Burke down and get back to our appointed subject, I talked too much myself.

It was late in the evening, when either Burke or I was holding forth, that I noted Malcolm Cowley, sitting there, rocking in silent mirth. But his amusement was not over our speeches; he was watching the stenotypist.

That unctuous man was *playing* his instrument. Shoulders swaying in appropriate rhythm, he was actually applying his fingers as though to the keyboard of a piano. I thought of it as the Hierarchy Concerto in A Minor.

The record of this meeting was published in two installments: in the winter 1950-51 and the spring 1951 issues.

*

I pause to ask myself: why have I told these stories? My answer is simple, but I hope true. This is a book of experiences—happy, sad, depressing, exhilarating, painful, pleasant. A book of experiences—and of people, those who participated in the experiences. I look back and I first see faces, first hear voices. Not great events, not weighty issues, not principles, plans and programs, but people. And that is be-

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cause individual human beings are what matter to me. People in comradeship, in confrontation, in consultation, in action, in enmity, in friendship.

My desultory progress, learned from Montaigne, though obviously not practiced with his grace and profundity, is intentional. I listen to hear, look to see what will come next in my return journey through the three decades with THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Hence, in these recent pages, the memory of one altercation or crisis has led to another.

But I have come to the end of that road. I remember no other outbursts of the sort I have described. I do, though, remember meetings, on an average of one every two or three years, when complaint after complaint has been offered by the members of the board. Say that four or five or six consecutive meetings have been models of constructive discussion, producing a wide range of topics proposed for future issues, and people suggested to write on them. (I have sometimes left our meetings with as many as thirty really first-rate ideas to work on.)

Comes the dark. One board member is tired of a certain regular columnist. A second one doesn't mind him, rather likes him in fact, but urges us to get rid of a different one. A third, ignoring the specific context, wants to know why, when we're doing so well, we don't pay larger fees to our contributors. A fourth thinks that our reprint fees are too small. A fifth feels that the most recent issue was mediocre, although he didn't speak up when I asked earlier for opinions about it. A sixth returns to the assault on the second columnist. Then the person who started the whole discussion points out that the cover design is really old hat; we need sprucing up.

At times it is overwhelming, this epidemic of censure, and the staff and I leave the meeting feeling downcast. But throughout, I try to find consolation in the early advice of Marjorie Nicolson: "Let them talk all they want to. People who get together this way only three or four times a year feel that they must express opinions, to show that they're actively interested. And it's much easier to blame than praise. So let them ventilate all they want to. But never let them vote."

Enough of negatives. Throughout the years, this group of distinguished men and women, combining continuity with new blood, has contributed the most amazing service that I can conceive of a magazine's enjoying. The play of minds, the wit and wisdom, the lively informal disagreements and the thoughtful contribution of topics and writers would be very difficult to match. Most of what's good in the magazine is owed to them.

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Dear Charles

Greg Kuzma

You should see it here, some days there is no wind
other days we stay indoors, eating icicles, Barb makes
them in the freezer, they have colors, some of them
are sweet. Dear Charles, last year when you weren't
around I used to think of you wearing your face, the
one you've mastered, how I still like you. Really, nothing
changes, and we've both mastered that. For effect, I have
taken to tying my hair back, playing baseball with the
neighbors. We have a good team, and, though
I strike out quite a bit, I'm still good for the long
ball. Dear Charles, you should see it here.

Winters we remain happy thinking the snow is atmosphere
for the dreams we're having. Summers we're too tired
to dream.

Dear Charles, I have taken up golf, mornings I'm out
on the course before anyone else, get three or four
holes behind me before I loosen up, then do, just about
the time somebody could watch me when I wouldn't get
nervous and slice, I find myself entirely alone.
There's a spring along the way nobody visits but me.
It's good for seeing my face in, and the water's fine.

Dear Charles, it is late now, late in the day, and
it puts me in the mood to wonder where the years go,

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the restless years, the desperate ones, and lately, the
good short ones, everybody laughing. Last year it
was bandaids only, next year maybe we'll require
tourniquets. Who knows. Dear Charles, why don't
you write me your plans for the summer, so maybe
we can get together.

✪ GREG KUZMA edits and publishes the Best Cellar Press Pamphlet Series and the poetry magazine *Pebble*. A collection of his poetry, *Good News,* was published in June. Three new collections are forthcoming.

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In- and Outdoor Schooling

Robert Frost and the Classics

HELEN H. BACON

It takes all sorts of in- and outdoor schooling
To get adapted to my kind of fooling.

Robert Frost's commitment to mind was only equaled by his distrust of scholarship. In "The Prerequisites" he tells us that as a young man, baffled by a poem of Emerson's, he refused to look for enlightenment in college, "which he had just left to improve his mind." He preferred to wait fifty years for the insight that made it possible "to deal with all but two lines of it." For Frost, metaphor was the heart of thought as well as poetry. Therefore, he insisted, one must discover for oneself the often subtle and obscure analogy. In the same essay he asserts, "Success in taking figures of speech is as intoxicating as success in making figures of speech. . . . The heart sinks when robbed of the chance to see for itself what a poem is all about."

That Frost's education at Lawrence High School, at Dartmouth and at Harvard was principally in Latin and Greek history, literature and philosophy, and that he taught Latin as a young man, needs no further documentation. That he read and thought about Greek and Latin authors intensely and subtly all his life was clear from reports of his conversation, as well as from his letters and his talks.

In every period of his life the allusions slip out so casually that they go almost unnoticed, but when followed up, they almost always turn out to be charged with awareness of their context and its application to the subject he is discussing.

In 1955, in a commencement address at Dartmouth, otherwise without "classical allusions," he said, "You've got to have something to say to the sphinx." I wonder how many of his hearers or readers had the "intoxication of success" that comes with "taking" that figure of speech in all its fullness. The theme of the talk is the theme of Sophocles' two Oedipus plays—slyly summed up in the homely advice to develop your mind so that "you can listen to anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence."

Charged and knowing references like this one are a sign of the degree to which Frost's thinking and feeling were permeated by Greek and Latin literature, and they are enchanting examples of that fooling, that Socratically ironic pose of being "just ordinary," which only several kinds of indoor schooling can detect.

✪ This is an abridged and modified form of an essay that HELEN H. BACON, professor of Greek and Latin at Barnard College, delivered at the Library of Congress symposium held last spring on the hundredth anniversary of Robert Frost's birth. The complete essay, including full bibliographical data, will be published by the Library of Congress, together with the other talks delivered on that occasion.

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But what of the poems? We have his word (in Whit Burnet's *This Is My Best*) that "they were all written by the same person, out of the same general region north of Boston, and out of the same books, a few Greek and Latin, practically no others in any other tongue than our own." And the man who wrote in his notebooks, "The way to read a poem in prose or verse is in the light of all the other poems ever written," would, I hope, give his blessing to this attempt to look at his poems in the light of Greek and Latin poetry.

The task is delicate. I have found few direct imitations of individual poems. He admitted to using the hendecasyllable, one of Catullus' favorite meters, in "For Once, Then, Something," and some of his other rhythmic devices seem to show the influence of Catullus or Horace. Direct allusions and obvious analogies are rare, though perhaps not quite so rare as critics have asserted. And yet the allusions and the analogies are there. To see the analogy, to make the connection, to note the human or inhuman unity that underlies the apparently unrelated worlds of the ancient Mediterranean and the country north of Boston, challenges our schooling, both indoor and out. It is part of Frost's "fooling" not to draw it to our attention, but to leave it for the properly schooled to discover. Frequently, as I hope to show, when it comes to classical literature, he seems purposely misleading. He likes to drop a clue in the form of an allusion to a passage in the Bible or English literature, which, while not in itself false, is not the whole story. But it distracts us from looking further and enjoying the "intoxication of success" that goes with "taking" the classical analogy that lies beyond. The King James Bible and the English poets are far more appropriate than pagan antiquity to the homely Yankee surface he likes to maintain. One of the most deeply guarded and cherished secrets of the poetry is the affinities, which are never identities, with classical poetry that this Yankee surface masks.

For a first example—what homelier words can you find than "fooling" and "schooling"? Not even a literary allusion here to suggest that there is something beyond them. But the ancient poets, particularly Plato (Aristotle quite correctly calls the dialogues poetry), Catullus, Horace and Vergil, like to refer to the practice of their art as "play," in Latin *ludere, ludus,* in Greek *paizein, paidiá.* The stance is always ironic with an implication that there is hardly anything more serious than this kind of play. It is perhaps as near as we ever come to reality. In his introduction to Robinson's *King Jasper,* Frost says "Give us immedicable woes—woes that nothing can be done for—woes flat and final. And then to play. The play's the thing. Play's the thing. All virtue in 'as if'." The idea of serious play also comes out in a letter to R. P. Tristram Coffin. "Life sways perilously at the confluence of opposing forces. Poetry in general plays perilously in the same wild place. In particular it plays perilously between truth and make-believe. It might be extravagant poetry to call it true make-believe—or making believe what is so." But do we need anything more than "The work is play for mortal stakes" of "Two Tramps in Mud Time"? Fooling.

Then schooling. That is another preoccupation of the ancient poets. It goes with fooling. Greek *scholé,* from which our word school is derived, is usually translated leisure. The Romans called it *otium.* It suggests frivolity, but there is no creative life without it. Again, serious play. School is where we have the leisure to lead the life of the mind. When Phaedrus asks Socrates if he has leisure, *scholé,* to hear about his discussion with Lysias, Socrates replies, quoting Pindar, "Don't you think I would consider hearing about your pastime 'even more important than business'?" The same insatiable Socratic appetite for talk at the expense of business can be seen in "A Time to Talk." The poet refuses to go on hoeing when hailed by a friend from the road. "No, not as there is a time to talk." He leaves his work and goes up to the stone wall "For a friendly visit." In "The Vantage Point" the poet passes the day "amid lolling juniper reclined," contemplatively poised between the natural world and the world of the town. In "To the Right Person" not only does the District Schoolhouse

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represent "higher" education because of its elevated mountain situation, but, precisely because its doors and windows are tight-shut and it cannot be entered

> . . . penitents [can take] their seat
> Upon its doorsteps as at mercy's feet
> To make up for a lack of meditation.

Higher education implies freedom for reflection—schooling in its original Greek sense. Lawrance Thompson in his biography frequently speaks of Frost's laziness. Certainly some of it was his fierce way of keeping space for the mind and the spirit to grow in—for *his* kind of schooling.

This may seem farfetched and overrefined. Perhaps after a few examples of equally delicate treatment of classical material where the documentation is somewhat firmer, it will be easier to believe the lengths to which he will carry fooling.

First, however, a general point should be clarified—namely, the commonly held view that goes back to the first reviews of *North of Boston,* and is most fully articulated in John Lynen's *Pastoral Art of Robert Frost,* that Frost is a pastoral poet. In the strict classical sense Frost is not a pastoral poet, though there may be some broadened sense of the term in modern criticism in which it applies to him. Frost himself spoke of Vergil's *Eclogues* in connection with *North of Boston.* "Build Soil," which echoes the first Eclogue, is subtitled "A Political Pastoral." A good deal has been made of Frost's remark to Sidney Cox, "I first heard the voice from a printed page in a Vergilian eclogue and from *Hamlet.*" If what he was noting in the *Eclogues* was also in *Hamlet,* it was not the spirit of the pastoral. He is referring not to the special relation of man and nature that characterizes ancient pastoral, but, as Cox goes on to point out, to "images to the ear," what he elsewhere called "the sound of sense." It is for this, and for the mime form, the poetic dialogue or monologue, that he drew on the *Eclogues* and Theocritus' *Idylls,* though Horace too, both in the lyrics, and in the satires and epistles, provides many models for this type of poem. In *This Is My Best,* Frost speaks of returning to people in *North of Boston* (after running away from them in *A Boy's Will*) "to show that I had forgiven them for being people." The brutal realities of "being people" which we find in poems like "A Servant to Servants" involve a struggle with an indifferent nature which is worlds away from ancient pastoral. As Reuben Brower has pointed out in his *Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention,* the pathetic fallacy, which is central to the *Eclogues* and the *Idylls,* is the antithesis of Frost's view of nature. The shepherds of Vergil and Theocritus hardly ever do any of the real work of the farm, which is the substance of so many of Frost's poems. Their real occupations are singing and lovemaking. Most of them are poets in rather transparent masquerade. They do not have to come to terms with nature because, in the world of pastoral, nature grieves with man's griefs and rejoices with his joys, wild animals grow gentle at the sound of the shepherd's magic flute, and the Golden Age of complete harmony of man and nature, which is proclaimed in the fourth Eclogue, is, if not quite here, at least on the way. Even when, as in "Two Look at Two" Frost comes closest to a sense of some harmony between man and nature, there is always his "as if—"

> *As if* the earth in one unlooked-for favor
> Had made them certain earth returned their love.

Is not Pan's discovery that his pipes

> . . . kept less of power to stir
> The fruited bough of the juniper
> And the fragile bluets clustered there
> Than the merest aimless breath of air

a declaration that henceforth instead of the pathetic fallacy we are going to have "as if" ("Pan with Us")? Frost's "as if" is a fine illustration of his remark, reported by Lawrance Thompson, that he was a "dualist in his thinking and a monist in his wishing." The harmony of man and nature is a profound but unrealized wish. The mind knows that nature looks on us "with neither love nor hate" ("Stars").

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In the pastoral world it is love that rules.

Omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori.
"Love conquers all things: let us too yield to love."
(*Eclogues* 10.61)

It is in Vergil's *Georgics* that we find the farmer struggling with the harsh facts of nature. *Labor* takes precedence over *amor.* Not *omnia vincit Amor,* but,

Labor omnia vicit
improbus, et duris urgens in rebus egestas.
(*Georgics* 1.145-6)

When the Golden Age ended, "Harsh work conquered all, and the cruel conditions of poverty that drive men on." It is in the *Georgics* that the work which the farmer patiently expends upon the soil becomes a metaphor for art, especially the art of the poet and the art of the statesman—the world of the spirit which cannot conquer nature but can transcend it. It is in the *Georgics* that the tools of the farmer's art are assimilated to the weapons of the soldier's art (the word *arma,* which means both tool and weapon, is played on over and over; compare "The Objection to Being Stepped On" and "From Iron"), where the parts of the plough and the construction of the threshing floor are dwelt on with the same loving detail as the ax-helve and the grindstone, and with the same awareness of their implications about the mystery of the relation of art and nature, and of the farmer's work as one of the sacraments of that mystery ("Mowing," "A Tuft of Flowers"). It is in the *Georgics* that we find the passion for the texture of soil, for fallow and sown, for weeds and wildflowers, for crops and timber and fruit trees, the naturalist's eye and ear for frog and mole and bird, and cow and horse and bee, for weather signs and seasons.

Frost is more a georgic than a pastoral poet. His own references to eclogues in connection with the poems is perhaps another characteristic bit of fooling. There are two lines in "Build Soil" that show that he knows the difference between Vergil's shepherds and the real thing. The speakers are named for the characters of the first Eclogue. Meliboeus, a real farmer going broke, says to Tityrus, who speaks with Frost's voice,

The Muse takes care of you. You live by writing
Your poems on a farm and call that farming. . . .
But have some pity on us who have to work.

In spite of his frequent and eloquent defense of taking it easy, Frost's "people" are the ones "who have to work."

The farmer who takes it easy, the kind of farming that involves no real work, also appear in "Something for Hope." Here Frost recommends that the farmer let the forest take over a pasture in which meadow sweet and steeple bush are about to crowd out the "edible grass." Then, he says, all you have to do is wait until you can cut down the forest for lumber, and you will have pasture again.

A cycle we'll say of a hundred years.
Thus foresight does it and laissez-faire. . . .
Patience and looking away ahead,
And leaving some things to take their course.
Hope may not nourish a cow or a horse,
But *spes alit agricolam* 'tis said.

Hope nourishes the farmer. The Latin quotation is from an elegy of Tibullus in which the poet is describing the lover whose "hope" of long-delayed fulfillment keeps him from going off on military service. What kind of "farmer" is "nourished" by the hope of a crop a hundred years hence? In a playful and characteristic inversion Frost has converted Tibullus' expression of the lover's or the farmer's "hope against hope" into an affirmation of the sustenance of the spirit that the poetic imagination can provide. The poet is fooling with his favorite notion of schooling—*scholé, otium.* It is worth noting that he has fitted the first half of a dactylic hexameter into his iambic tetrameter without violating the Latin quantities, and has changed Tibullus' plural, *agricolas,* to singular, *agricolam,* simply, I believe, to avoid another *s* in the line.

Frost's sense of the violence and indifference of nature, inside and outside peo-

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ple, which no skill or devotion of man can totally subdue, links him not only to the *Georgics*. In its Epicurean form it is a leitmotiv of Lucretius, to whom Frost alludes more often and more directly than he does to Vergil. Far from making him a "modern," as John Lynen has suggested, it puts him in a tradition that goes back at least to Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*—the tradition that sees man as both part of nature, doomed, like all things to suffer decay, and, at the same time, by virtue of mind, transcending nature. Who is the voyager in "Reluctance," who having set forth upon a journey into the wilderness, and climbed "the hills of view," comes "by the highway home," where he finds the sleepers who do not seek knowledge? Whose "feet question whither?" Whose heart rejects in anguish the knowledge reason has brought, the knowledge that is both the end of innocence and the acceptance of mortality? Oedipus, after journeying to Delphi on Mount Parnassus, and receiving Apollo's oracle there, then took the highroad "home" to Thebes, on those ever-questioning feet, which for Sophocles are just as pervasive a symbol of the search for knowledge as the eyes. In Thebes, in contrast to the "sleepers," he confronted the riddle of mortality head on, and endured the treason to the heart which is the message of reason—"To go with the drift of things."

Is this an intentional parallel or merely an archetypal pattern of which the poet is unaware? Both "The Mountain" and "Directive" deal more fully and explicitly with the theme of Apollo and Parnassus, and, in addition, link it up with the spring of the Muses and with Dionysus, who shared Apollo's cult at Delphi.

Dionysus, like Apollo, is a god of music and inspiration, but he is also, and importantly, a god of wildness and instinct. Wildness is one aspect of nature's indifference, one of the sources of the terror with which Frost confronts life in such poems as "The Demi-Urge's Laugh" and "The Most of It." But wildness can turn into poetry. In fact, there is no poetry without wildness. In "The Figure a Poem Makes" Frost speaks of the mystery of "how a poem can have wildness and at the same time a subject that shall be fulfilled. . . . It begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse" and only as it acquires form achieves its "momentary stay against confusion." Nobody knew this better than the Greeks. Pan turns the impulse to rape into the music of the syrinx. The Muses are goddesses of wild mountain springs—Castalia, Helicon, Pieria. Dionysus dances with his barefoot maenads in the snows of the wild peaks of Parnassus, but he also harnesses leopards or panthers to his chariot. He is not the god of impulse run wild, as he so often appears in modern literature, but the god of impulse transmuted into art, and therefore has every right to his joint cult with Apollo at Delphi on Mount Parnassus.

It is this complex of motifs, the mountain, the spring, wildness and art (which a classicist cannot help thinking of as Parnassus, the Muses, Dionysus and Apollo) that one finds played on and elaborated in "The Mountain" and "Directive."

The two poems, one first published in 1914, the other in 1946, parallel each other point for point and motif for motif, but it is in "Directive" that the theme of the spring of the Muses and its attendant imagery of Dionysus and Apollo is most fully developed. The poem begins with going "Back in time," and continues by going back into geological time. As in "The Mountain," which also evokes a past as ancient as the mountain itself, the goal of the journey is a mysterious spring at the summit, to which there is no real path. The guide "only has at heart your getting lost." The mountain is called Panther Mountain. The panther or leopard that Dionysus harnesses to his chariot expresses, as I have already pointed out, the power of art to give order and direction to wildness and impulse. In "The Mountain," the mountain has the Old Testament name of Hor, the mountain where Moses' brother Aaron, the priest and orator, died. Like Parnassus, and the "hills of view" in "Reluctance," it is a place of illumination where one may have "a view around the world." Just as the wilderness of Mount Hor contains the remnants of a town, the wilderness of Panther

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Mountain conceals a civilization.* It was once the site of *two* "village cultures" which

> . . . faded
> Into each other. Both of them are lost.

I suggest that here, in an even more explicit evocation of Parnassus, Frost refers to the twin cults of Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi, now lost in the past, like the "pagan mirth" of "Pan with Us." Lost, but recoverable "if you are lost enough to find yourself." If you are, then you are entitled to enter the world of the mystic fellowship of the Muses.

> Pull in your ladder road behind you
> And put a sign up CLOSED to all but me.
> Then make yourself at home.

Only after this comes the world of art, play, fooling—

> . . . the children's house of make-believe,
> Some shattered dishes underneath a pine,
> The playthings in the playhouse of the children.
> Weep for what little things could make them glad.
> Then for the house that is no more a house, . . .
> This was no playhouse but a house in earnest.

The "real" house is gone for good, but,

> Your destination and your destiny's
> A brook that was the water of the house,
> Cold as a spring as yet so near its source,
> Too lofty and original to rage.

In "The Mountain" too, rage is a manifestation of the river in its lower reaches. At the summit is the ultimate mystery beyond rage—the Muses' spring, that originates in wildness, but transcends mere wildness—the "momentary stay against confusion." Here is kept the sacramental cup,

> A broken drinking goblet like the Grail
> Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,
> So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.

"The wrong ones," who "can't get saved," are the profane, the uninitiated into the cult of the Muses, those who do not know about "true make-believe." The goblet is the goblet of "true make-believe" stolen from the children's playhouse. In "The Mountain" the mysterious spring at the summit also exemplifies the Muses' love of play and make-believe. It appears to be "cold in summer, warm in winter," but

> I don't suppose the water's changed at all.
> You and I know enough to know it's warm
> Compared with cold, and cold compared with warm.
> But all the fun's in how you say the thing.

The last two lines of "Directive" are a true salute to Apollo, who as god of harmony is also god of medicine, of healing, both of body and of spirit.

> Here are your waters and your watering place.
> Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

Apollo and Dionysus share the cult at the spring of the Muses on Panther Mountain, as they did on Mount Parnassus.

Like the allusion to Mount Hor in "The Mountain," the allusions to the Grail and Saint Mark are not so much false clues, as a way of preserving the New England tone while at the same time hinting at a mystery beyond. The journey up the mountain, beyond rage, to the source is certainly a journey into the poet's past, a deeply per-

* The town on Mount Hor is called Lunenburg. The place has a name (Lunenburg is a real town in Vermont) and a culture. But there is an ambiguousness about the place. "We call it Hor: I don't know if that's right." And, to add to the mystery, I have it on the authority of the retired town clerk of Lunenburg, Vermont, that there is no Mount Hor near Lunenburg, although in the poem "Hor is the township and the township's Hor." A little farther north on Lake Willoughby there is both a Mount Hor and a Mount Pisgah—"hills of view." In the Lawrence High School Bulletin for December 1891 there is an essay by Robert Frost entitled "Petra and Its Surroundings," which begins, "On the summit of Mount Hor, nestles a shrine beneath which, the Arabians say, lie the bones of the priest, Aaron. It is a place of the wildest grandeur—one worthy the last resting place of the Israelitish orator, overlooking as it does the mountain fastnesses of the warlike sons of Esau, through whose country the Jews strove so long in vain to force a passage." A place of words, and a place of view, which Frost has transplanted to Lunenburg, Vermont, and merged with the classical place of view, Parnassus.

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sonal experience in which the Grail is a symbol of individual salvation. But, in addition, it is a journey to the spring of the Muses on Mount Parnassus, where salvation is achieved through reintegration not just with the poet's own past but with the ancient tradition of poetry.

As a footnote to this interpretation, I cannot help speculating about why both on Mount Hor and on Panther Mountain, at the last stage of the journey, even the vestiges of the path are gone. On Mount Hor there are only "Great granite terraces. . . . Shelves one could rest a knee on getting up." On Panther Mountain it is a "ladder road" that leads to the "height of the adventure." Is Frost evoking Apollo's devotee, the priestess Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* (a healer, who kept the plague from Athens for ten years), when she expounds love's "Greater Mysteries" to Socrates as an ascent "as though by steps" from the particular to the universal and transcendent beauty, which culminates in spiritual procreation? Frost frequently denied being a Platonist, but like Vergil (who was not a Platonist either) he often Platonizes for poetic purposes. "Trial by Existence," as others have noted, refers to the myth of Er in the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*. I do not think it has been noted that it also echoes the Platonizing scene in Elysium in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. "The Master Speed" paraphrases the myth of the soul in *Phaedrus*. It would be hard to say whether "On a Bird Singing in Its Sleep" is playing more with the theory of evolution or the Pythagorean-Platonic theory of transmigration of souls. In my opinion it is part of Frost's "fooling" to superimpose the one on the other. He also brings Darwin and Plato together in "Accidentally on Purpose," where he counters the mechanistic hypothesis of the *Origin of Species* with the deeply Platonic

> Grant me intention, purpose, and design—
> That's near enough for me to the Divine.

As a monist in wishing he sometimes found Plato irresistible. Think of "A Never Naught Song":

> There was never naught.
> There was always thought.

The Platonic allusions in "The Mountain" and in "Directive," if they are really there, reinforce Theodore Morrison's point that "Directive" expresses Frost's view that the ultimate revelation of poetry and philosophy is the same. "Greatest of all attempts to say one thing in terms of another is the philosophical attempt to say matter in terms of spirit or spirit in terms of matter, to make the final unity . . . it is the height of poetry, the height of all thinking."

After this it will perhaps not seem too improbable if I suggest that Frost, in another characteristic bit of fooling, implies that the Hyla Brook is to his New Hampshire farm what the *Fons Bandusiae* was to Horace's Sabine farm—an ordinary watercourse in a humble alien setting far from Greece, transformed by its owner's powers of song into another spring of the Muses. Horace's sixteen-line ode celebrates a ritual, an offering of flowers, wine and a young goat to the spring, probably on the day of the *Fontanalia*, the peasant Feast of Fountains, October 12. It preserves an almost homely rural Italian surface without literary references or direct allusion to the Muses. The young goat to be sacrificed has budding horns that proclaim him ready for love and battle, but "In vain: for the offspring of the lustful herd will stain with his red blood your icy streams." The wild Dionysiac impulse (the goat is also sacred to Dionysus) will be deflected and transformed in the waters of the spring. Lust and violence will become song. The spring itself, which never fails to offer refuge and refreshment, even in the hottest days of the Dog Star, is then saluted by the poet, "You too shall become one of the fabled fountains [that is, Castalia, Pieria, Helicon] when I sing of the live oak that overhangs your hollow rocks, from which leap down your voluble waters." The waters themselves have a voice, they are *loquaces*, and the song of the poet has given his little Italian spring a place among the famous springs of the Muses in Greek literature.

"Hyla Brook" is one line shorter than

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Fons Bandusiae. Frost's brook also has, or had, movement and a voice. "By June our brook's run out of speed and song." But in deliberate contrast to the *Fons Bandusiae,* it disappears in hot weather, taking with it all the singers—the Hylas, or spring peepers. While the Italian spring continues to shine "brighter than glass," *splendidior vitro,* the vanished Hyla Brook seems to have "flourished and come up in jewelweed."

Its bed is left a faded paper sheet
Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat—
A brook to none but who remember long.

The voice is gone for the moment, but the paper on which songs are inscribed is there. (If Frost can see "A Patch of Old Snow" as newsprint he can see the "faded paper" of the brook bed as the text of a poem.) The brook still brings refreshment to those who can remember. The Muses, *we* should remember, are the daughters of Memory, and the spring song of the Hylas also evoked memory "Like ghost of sleigh bells in a ghost of snow." The next two lines are another inversion. Horace's "You too shall become one of the fabled fountains," appears as:

This as it will be seen is other far
Than with brooks taken otherwhere in song.

But different as it is, this brook too has been "taken in song" and has shown that it can nourish the spirit through the dog days. And then the last line—"We love the things we love for what they are." It takes some "indoor schooling" to realize the irony and richness of allusion in "what they are." Perhaps there is a sly intention in the fact that it takes some "*outdoor* schooling" to understand the poem that follows it, "The Oven Bird." As Robert Pack has pointed out, we do not have the whole message until we realize that the bird who "knows in singing not to sing" says "Teacher, teacher."

One other spring of the Muses is the pasture spring of the introductory poem of *North of Boston,* "The Pasture"—the poem that became, as it were, Frost's signature. He used it as the introductory poem for all the collected and selected poems that appeared during his life, and, appropriately, it appears in the same place in Edward Connery Lathem's *The Poetry of Robert Frost.* The "You come too," whether it be addressed to a friend or a lover, is an invitation to a comrade in the fellowship of the Muses to join him in contemplating a twofold mystery—the unquenchable spring and the miracle of creation in the form of the just-born calf. It is interesting that in what might be called his theme song, Frost's tone is again more georgic than pastoral. The participants are not poets in masquerade. It is a real farm scene, which symbolizes art.

Frost's involvement with Horace, Catullus and the Greek lyric tradition in which they worked, is too complex and pervasive to demonstrate in detail here. "Mowing" provides a comprehensive illustration. In a less obvious way than "Prayer to Spring," or "Rose Pogonias," or "Directive," or, in quite another mood, "A Record Stride," it describes, or reenacts, a ritual, as do so many of Horace's odes, including *Fons Bandusiae.* The fact that a mystery is being celebrated is indicated by the way the whispering of the scythe frames the poem and raises its central question. It whispers, "something about the heat of the sun," or

. . . about the lack of sound—
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.

Part of the mystery is the soundless action of the sun that ripens the hay. But there is more. The poet insists that the message of the ritual of mowing, whatever it is, is no dream.

Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.
The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

Like "the things we love for what they are,"

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the "fact," here so tenderly presented in terms of a New England hayfield, is heavily charged with allusion, for it is the central fact of most of the Mediterranean agricultural mystery cults—there will be no harvest unless the flowers die. Adonis dies, Attis dies, Persephone picking flowers in the fields of Enna is carried off to Hades. The flowers must go before the hay can make. The snake, that equally widespread symbol of potency and rebirth, while startled, glides off, affirming the death of virginity and the promise of the harvest. With the single word "love" Frost has, as the myths I have mentioned do, linked the fertility of the fields to sexual and spiritual procreation. With so pervasive an image as this, it is not possible to pinpoint the source. I can only say that my immediate association is to the broken flower, which represents virginity in the wedding songs of both Sappho and Catullus, and to Catullus' poignant comparison of betrayed love to the flower at the edge of the meadow cut down by the plow. The flower destined for sacrifice to the harvest also appears in "Rose Pogonias," "Spring Pools," "The Quest of the Purple-Fringed," and in a very special form in "The Tuft of Flowers," where the flowers that were spared by the scythe of the early morning mower carry the georgic message that the farmer's work symbolizes art, which transcends the order of nature and can establish "brotherly speech" not only between the absent, but even between the living and the dead.

There are many aspects of Frost's indoor schooling in Greek and Latin literature that I have only touched on, others that I have completely omitted, such as the Lucretian vision of some of the poems about science, his adaptations of the techniques of Horace's satires and epistles in the long discursive poems ("New Hampshire," "Build Soil," "Lesson for Today," "How Hard It Is to Keep from Being King"), and the themes from Greek tragedy that underlie the apparently biblical "A Masque of Reason" and "A Masque of Mercy." I would like to end with one more poem about the fellowship of art, which is also a particularly deft example of the kind of schooling and fooling I have been discussing—"The Lost Follower."

It is apparent not only from the title, but from the structure of the poem, that Frost is evoking Robert Browning's "Lost Leader."

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
> Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
> Lost all the others she lets us devote.

Browning is talking about a poet, whom he always refused to identify, who abandoned the company of true poets for money and recognition. He goes on to contrast the power of gold, which enslaves, with the power of poetry, which liberates—evoking the spiritual fellowship of Shakespeare, Milton, Burns and Shelley. He mourns for the leader, irrevocably lost in this life, but envisions a reunion and reconciliation with him after death.

> Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
> Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

Frost's evocation of the poem is, characteristically, an inversion. Browning's mercenary leader has become an idealistic follower.

> The gold for which they leave the golden line
> Of lyric is a golden light divine
> Never the gold of darkness from a mine.

The young poet who deserts "the golden line of lyric" is trying, through politics or self-sacrifice, to achieve what poetry has failed to do, bring about the Golden Age on earth. He does not understand that his ideal cannot be achieved as a physical reality, but may be found in the fellowship of the Muses,

> Right beside you booklike on a shelf,
> Or even better godlike in yourself.

Frost's poem like Browning's ends in heaven. Looking at his lost follower, Frost sees

> . . . in the sadness in his eye
> Something about a kingdom in the sky

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(As yet unbrought to earth) he means to try.

But we are missing something if we stop with Browning, just as we are missing something if we stop with Mount Hor in "The Mountain," or the Grail and Saint Mark in "Directive." Horace's sixteenth Epode is about a world so full of greed, suffering and violence that the only salvation is for the little band of the pure in heart (*pii*) to take ship and sail to the islands of the blessed. Again the poem ends in heaven. "Jupiter set this shore apart for the pure in heart, when he contaminated the Golden Age with bronze . . . and then with iron made life harsh. From these misfortunes a happy escape is granted to the pure in heart, with me as their—" one expects pilot, but the word that comes is "bard" (*vate me*), a favorite word with Frost. Horace offers himself as the leader of an elect band who will discover in poetry the Golden Age that has vanished from the earth forever.

The "golden line of lyric," which Frost's young follower abandons in the hope of actualizing the Golden Age, is, I believe, a further and even more abstruse allusion to Horace's poem. The golden line is the name of a rhetorical device of the dactylic hexameter, described by Dryden in a classic passage as "that verse commonly which they call golden, or two substantives and two adjectives, with a verb betwixt them to keep the peace" (*Preface to Sylvae: Or the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies*). The "golden line of lyric" might be thought to have nothing to do with this abstruse philological fact, since dactylic hexameter is usually classified as an epic rather than a lyric meter, though it is also the meter of pastoral, both Greek and Roman. However, a good many of the *Epodes* use dactylic hexameters in combination with other meters, and of these the majority are lyrics. The sixteenth Epode alternates dactylic hexameters with iambic trimeters. The incidence of "golden lines" in the hexameters, particularly toward the end of the poem, is so much higher than "normal" that it is the subject of comment by scholars. I have not been able to find out whether the conventional curriculum of Frost's student days would have included information about the golden line. But whether or not he learned about it as a student, it seems likely that he would have read Dryden's great essay on the art of translating classical poetry, and noted his phrase about the golden line. I am as sure as one can be about anything for which there is no documentary proof that the "golden line of lyric" alludes to the golden lines of the sixteenth Epode. How much further can fooling and schooling be carried?

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SIGHTINGS

Alternative Television: The British Model

RICHARD DYER MacCANN

In spite of the prior claims of Stonehenge, the Scottish Highlands, Westminster Abbey, and the public house known as the Cheshire Cheese, I have been forced to conclude that television may be Britain's greatest national treasure. Throughout the world, TV stations are buying programs bearing the British hallmark of excellence in literary, dramatic and cinematic art. Within Great Britain, television's wide range of entertainment and education has become a laboratory for the national culture.

The British pattern of broadcasting is based on two main principles, derived from experience: the security of automatic subsidy, by which BBC programs and artists are supported by license fees, not by annual appropriations, and the stimulus of competing systems, by which three networks, two socialist and one commercial, offer the audience a rich variety of alternatives. That the pattern works so well may simply be due to some inherent mystery of British temperament. An American is nevtheless bound to be hopeful that the principles, as well as the programs, can be fruitfully adopted elsewhere.

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I was in England during 1973 for a study of the relationships between film and government, past and present. Certain historical precedents interested me. Many documentaries of the 1930s, for example, were sponsored by government agencies, and John Grierson later produced a number of feature films paid for by public funds. But subsidy for both documentaries and dramas operates today most directly and effectually through the channels of broadcasting, as in most other European countries. Furthermore, knowing something of the shadowy status nowadays of British theatrical films —trapped between the somnolence of British exhibitors and the declining domination of American investment—I was prepared to believe that the place to find interesting images was not at the cinema but on the television set. So we subscribed to *Radio Times* (the informative weekly for viewers of the BBC) and *TV Times* (for commercial television) and began to check off interesting shows.

The first innovation to catch our eye was a BBC Saturday-night program offering one-act plays, reports from art exhibitions, interviews with artists, and musical performances. There was a retrospective of films by the American director, John Ford, a Friday evening encounter with rare foreign language pictures, and critical preview programs with clips from current productions. There were full-length plays once a month, and every Monday a new, hour-long "Play for Today" with a contemporary orientation. Here the gamut was wide: central characters ranged from a politician, a team manager and an "asset stripper," to a divorced man and a secretary. A story

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about polytechnic students and their living quarters was followed by a tense character study of a man returning home from a prison term. Guns, of course, were completely missing, as they are in most British-produced series.

Informational programs were abundant, sometimes occurring during prime evening hours. Besides the news at 5:45 and at 9:00, there were Monday's hour-long "Panorama" at 8:00 (usually a discussion on some current issue, plus a documentary film), a Tuesday documentary after the news at 9:25, a Wednesday documentary-discussion called "Man Alive," and a wide variety of other nonfiction features. Children's programs were relaxed rather than "electric," and between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. the Open University offered urbane pictorial lectures (produced by the BBC) on World War I, the Industrial Revolution, and a hundred other topics.

We switched to Independent Television once in a while. The general impression was one of low to middlebrow emphasis, with a good deal of wrestling, many American action shows and British soap operas, and quite a few minor movies of various vintages. But we also began to notice that ITV news at 10:00 sometimes had more sparkle, and the "World in Action" weekly documentary often had more professional thrust than "Panorama." My wife discovered a remarkable drama series produced by Granada TV (one of the ITV companies) called "Country Matters," based on short stories by A. E. Coppard and H. E. Bates. I came across a single Yorkshire TV documentary worthy of comparison with the best of Robert Flaherty's work: "Too Long a Winter" told the story of a woman named Hannah Hauxwell, who manages by herself an isolated farm in the hills.

It was some time before we realized how central television was to our cultural experience in Britain. We spent evenings away from the set going to theater, opera, ballet, and even three or four movies, but we usually found ourselves scheduling these London events to fit in with television. Only the landscape could compete for our attention on any equal basis, and even this was available on television—tours of castles, walking trips through wild country, aerial views of inaccessible coastlines.

The variety and richness of British television should not have been a surprise to us. Some kind of treasure-house had to lie behind the extraordinary examples already seen on the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States—Sir Kenneth Clark's art history lessons called "Civilization" and all those dramatic extracts from literature and history under the marquee of "Masterpiece Theater." Americans were able to see "The First Churchills," "The Spoils of Poynton," "The Possessed" and "Père Goriot" in 1970-71, and in the following year such series as "Jude the Obscure," "The Six Wives of Henry VIII" (also seen on CBS), and "Elizabeth R." Others on PBS since 1972 include "Point Counterpoint," "Vanity Fair," "War and Peace" and "The Golden Bowl." It was a suitably international theater, representing Henry James, Dostoevsky, Balzac and Tolstoy as well as Hardy, Huxley and Thackeray. Challenging American commercial television, these creations proved that "The Forsyte Saga" was not just a flash in the tube. PBS and the BBC have carried off many recent television academy awards in the United States, especially in the acting department. With nine Emmys in 1972 and seven in 1973, the BBC could fairly be said to have taken on a leading role in American television. Even NBC joined the club and collected four of those 1973 awards for Alistair Cooke's "America." During the 1973-74 season, British commercial TV was especially active in the world market competition, with "The World at War," a twenty-six-part series about World War II, narrated by Laurence Olivier (produced by Thames Television) and "Upstairs, Downstairs," a lively Edwardian drama series made for London Weekend TV.

Then there are the remakes. As long ago as "Peyton Place," American commercial television copied the twice-a-week serial approach of "Coronation Street" on British ITV. But "All in the Family," as most viewers know, is a direct copy of the story situation in "Till Death Us Do Part,"

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which began in June 1966. "Sanford and Son" came from "Steptoe and Son." Both were popular favorites on the BBC.

By all accounts, what the United States networks may next copy is the sensible British system of limited runs. Instead of a thirteen-week or twenty-six-week schedule for all shows, British television programs last only as long as the scripts hold out. A dramatic serial may stop at the end of four weeks or last for fifteen. "Steptoe" ran twelve years, off and on, but with only forty-nine episodes (and a limited number of reruns). The same is true of stand-up comedy, variety shows and plays. It means that a "new series" may start almost any week in the year. Thus the airwaves seem constantly fresh and worthy of notice by both viewers and reviewers, and when packages are sold abroad they are varied enough in length to fit all sorts of schedules.

During the 1960s, American killers, legal and illegal, could be viewed on TV sets in nearly every country of the globe, stalking their prey with handguns. This grisly parade has not ceased, but now it is British television that is the hot item in international trade. The BBC alone has five thousand titles in circulation, and of these about five hundred are being shown somewhere every week, often dubbed into the local language. There are some police stories among them—"Z Cars" and "Softly, Softly" are slick and suspenseful, and "Dr. Who" has been pleasing science-fiction addicts everywhere. The general picture, however, is one of lofty literary and educational standards.

The temptations of world markets are well known among film producers, who have seen so many projects with an attractive national flavor changed by international casting and coproduction financing into a vague European mishmash. Lew Grade, known as the leading huckster in British commercial TV, seems willing to tie his Associated Television to any kind of audience-oriented proposal that will draw American financing. The BBC, on the contrary, has been somewhat sobered by its encounter with Time-Life on "The Search for the Nile," claiming that never in the future will the BBC retain less than fifty-one percent control. It is a difficult position to hold to, and impossible without the security of subsidy.

If there is a new British empire of cultural communications, it has been a long time coming. Students of British film history will recall the great hope of Alexander Korda that *The Private Life of Henry the Eighth,* which was so popular in the United States in 1933-34, would lead a new wave of British movies through the rococo first-run theaters of North America. The dominant American motion picture distributors would have none of that.

Again in the 1950s, with the cooperation of a special "art theater" releasing unit of Universal Pictures, Michael Balcon hoped to share his Alec Guinness comedies with the American market. It was a notable skirmish, but the fortunes of commerce soon swung the other way, as they had two decades before. American corporations, backed with worldwide distribution income, again began to buy up British acting talent and, even more spectacularly than in 1937, moved into London to make pictures. British law, by a curious contrivance called the Eady Plan, made this inevitable: anybody who used a certain high proportion of British stars and crews could take away extra profits in proportion to box-office income. The 1960s meant "swinging London" for film people, all right, but when losses hit the United States companies in the 1970s, the bonanza business disappeared and the British film industry, by any serious definition, disappeared with it.

The BBC is not going to disappear. If it were dependent, like the feature film industry, on the ups and downs of its world sales, the BBC would not last twenty-four hours: sales of $7,500,000 overseas in 1972 brought less than a third of that in profit, about $1,875,000 after costs and artists' fees for reruns. The operating budget of the British Broadcasting Corporation is provided by the British people—$300,000,000 a year, about one-fifth of the annual revenue of the three TV networks in the United States.

Once a year every TV owner in Great

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Britain is required to go to his local post office and pay a license fee of $17.50, if he has one or more black-and-white sets, or $30 if he has color. This $2.50 per month pays for a great deal more than a month's broadcasting—the daily mechanical transmission of two television schedules and four different radio programs. It is the supporting basis for a continuing high standard. It provides a unique system of security for the development and training of performing artists and creative writers, as well as for the continuing support of programs of public affairs.

The BBC does not have to tailor its programs ever more rigidly to the tastes of the widest possible audience in order to maintain revenue from advertising. There is no advertising. Nor does the BBC have to temper its programming according to the winds of politics. Its income does not come from annual appropriations by the government of the day. The stability of a budget based on an annual tax on TV sets has made possible the richness and variety of BBC programming. Without that settled annual license fee, accepted by the British people since 1927, the world would never have known so soon what independent public service broadcasting could be like.

The BBC Television Center is a great cylindrical glass house located in Shepherd's Bush at White City, six subway stops west of Marble Arch in London. Although regional stations prepare shows of their own, this is the hub for planning and production. Except for the studios on the ground floor, there is nothing lavish about it. The TV Center is a government building. Anyone who has worked in Washington would recognize the clues: modest identification cards (so easily replaced) on the doors, cell-like rooms with plain desks and chairs, alternating cells for file cabinets and secretaries. Even the executive meeting rooms on the top deck are far from luxurious. The office of the managing director, while graced with a carpet and a few coffee-resistant easy chairs, would be looked on with disdain by the second assistant statistician at NBC.

The prevailing atmosphere is one of individual poverty and collective pride. High morale does not require high salaries: the BBC handbook claims that only twenty-one of the twenty-five thousand employees receive more than $25,000 a year. There is a good deal of articulate ideological opposition within the ranks, and every so often a department head, a director, or a top executive will yield to temptation and move out to one of the commercial companies that are constituent members of the ITV network. Better pay is bound to be one reason; the unwieldy size of the BBC is another. But many people stay because they know the money that is spent "gets onto the screen." There are no stockholders to compete for it.

It is hard to believe now that in 1955-57 there was a real crisis of confidence at the BBC. During those years it was not unusual for seventy percent of the audience to turn to the new experience of commercial television. Such shocking shows as "People Are Funny" and "Beat the Clock" were transfixing staid British eyes, and by May of 1957 it was possible to watch eight giveaway shows per week. As Peter Black, the *Daily Mail*'s TV columnist, later explained, nobody had ever seen before on British television a wife about to win a refrigerator "for whitewashing her husband in thirty seconds starting from NOW."

What finally happened, of course, was that the BBC had to become more interesting, more lively and more popular. Educational films and literary quizzes began to disappear; comedy and variety shows became more prominent. Schedules were shuffled and ITV favorites began to meet stronger BBC competition across the board. Behind all this unseemly activity was the growing realization that the license fee might no longer seem justifiable if the BBC could hold only thirty percent of the audience.

Imagine, furthermore, a television schedule with a hole in it. Before 1955, every British household was free of the temptations of TV from 6:00 to 7:00 in the evening. During that hour, widely known as the Toddlers' Truce, the children could be fed and

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kissed and put to bed. It was a civilized idea, conceivable only in England and only under a monopoly system of broadcasting. Commercial schedules, however, do not have holes in them. When ITV came on the air, there was no longer a truce but a challenge. The BBC met that challenge with the "Tonight" show. Quite unlike the Johnny Carson show of the same name, "Tonight" was a unique blend of BBC seriousness and popular style, a sort of intellectual variety show.

Grace Wyndham Goldie is a legendary personality in the history of broadcasting. Former critic of radio programs for the BBC's own *Listener* magazine, she had been brought into television production in the earliest days and eventually became head of what was called for years the Talks Department. Together with Donald Baverstock, a young Welshman who seemed to have fifty ideas a minute, she undertook to make "Tonight" into the voice of the ordinary man and woman, responding to all sorts of interests and bringing into the studio all sorts of voices. At the same time, it became an opportunity to develop a regular flood of new talents.

For eight years, from 1957 to 1965, BBC television viewers were assaulted every weeknight with such brisk features as an interview with a football referee, a visual tour of donkey paths in the Highlands, or a report on the world champion needle-threader. There were serious documentaries on the chronically unemployed and interviews with people in foreign lands. A new Dutch flood control project and a Scottish suspension bridge got equal time—usually no more than five minutes. Future filmmakers like John Schlesinger, Jack Gold and Kevin Billington did brief sketches of little people in and out of the news. Alan Whicker toured the world, David Attenborough did nature studies, Cliff Michelmore acted as master of ceremonies. Toward the last, there was a lighthearted display of professional piano-smashing by two teams of furniture men: they bettered the time of some American students in Detroit (four minutes fifty-one seconds), destroying an unsalable upright in one minute twenty-three seconds flat. "Laugh-In," which did appear for three seasons on the BBC, must have seemed tame after eight years of "Tonight."

It was natural for such a show to spawn others. "Monitor," beginning in 1958, was specifically devoted to such matters as poetry, painting, architecture, music, ballet and film. In 1962 the satirical-political show, "That Was the Week That Was," gained instant fame—and caused another upheaval when it crossed the Atlantic. Drama, too, was allotted more time and a great deal more freedom of expression under the supervision of Sidney Newman (now head of the National Film Board of Canada), a rare case of an executive brought in from ITV. In fact, "Aunty BBC" by the end of the 1960s was frequently accused of being "too permissive." It was an unruly period—and the audience came back.

A lot of gifted people, of course, were involved in these changes. When British commercial television began in 1955, the obvious source for experienced personnel was the BBC. The long-term result of this wholesale talent raid has been a BBC led by relatively young men who have advanced through the ranks at high speed. Today all the top executives are former program producers, a situation inconceivable in the United States, where top salesmen are the ones who regularly move up into decision-making jobs. Aubrey Singer, recently appointed head of BBC-2, was last in charge of the "features" department, which included documentaries about scientific and economic subjects. Alasdair Milne, a brash and brilliant young Scotsman who was one of the busiest directors on the "Tonight" show and produced "That Was the Week That Was," is now director of programming. Huw Wheldon came to the managing director's office in 1969 via publicity, documentary production, and performance: he was best known for seven years as the master of ceremonies of "Monitor," the BBC's weekly review of the arts.

Huw Wheldon is as securely in charge at the TV Center as anyone ever has been; Charles Curran, director-general of the BBC, has given him the unusual status of

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deputy director-general. A broad-shouldered, weather-beaten, animated Welshman with a laugh like an indulgent thunderclap, he is rather far away from the Oxford-Cambridge image that once was supposed to dominate British broadcasting. His grandfather was a Presbyterian minister, and his father was knighted for work in Welsh education; but Wheldon himself was probably more affected by the disciplines of the Sixth Airborne Brigade in World War II (from which he emerged as a major) than by his years at the London School of Economics. An American comparison is hard to find: Wheldon is a combination of various parts of Fred Friendly, Ed Sullivan, Dick Cavett and Franklin Roosevelt. Thrust into a position as a kind of world statesman of communication, he sniffs this rarefied air with gusto, reminding all listeners that the new British role stems naturally from great British traditions: literature, drama, liberalism and even the Magna Charta. "It is through stories," he declares, "that we learn how to live in the world—and with ourselves. TV is a storytelling medium. We tell stories, as do historians and biographers, which are based on fact; and we tell stories, as do novelists and playwrights, which leap out of the imagination."

It is a convenient time, by and large, to be managing BBC television. Lately there has been much speculation about a fourth channel, and another of those periodic reexaminations of British broadcasting may be set in motion at any time. But the competitive crisis of the 1950s has calmed down to a fifty-fifty split of the audience with ITV, and the worldwide sale of British TV programs seems a culmination of two decades of experimentation, controversy and growth.

The BBC may have become more windy of late. The *Glasgow Herald* predicted after the passing of "Tonight" that features would be "simply extended from five minutes to an hour." BBC-2, launched in April 1964, is consciously but not rigidly dedicated to minority viewers, and once more there are spots on the BBC schedule for bookish discussion, collector's programs and archaeology. The documentaries are very frequent indeed, and "Man Alive" seems to be devoted, much of the time, to bringing government officials and ordinary people into the studio in large groups, seating them on opposing bleachers, and letting them shout at each other.

There is nothing quite like "Tonight" or "That Was the Week That Was" on the air today. At the same time, the last schedule of arts programs I saw suggests that bold explorations are still to be expected. Plans for Sunday's weekly "Omnibus" included profiles of Yeats, Kafka, Rodin and Truffaut, plus special studies of art student sculptors, the Royal Academy and the hero in popular British fiction.

The overall picture is still a remarkably varied spectacle—a combination, as Huw Wheldon likes to say, of "insight and delight"—inherited in part from the time when ITV caused the "Tonight" show, and the "Tonight" show made the BBC pretty much what it is today.

Reentry into the pressure area of American television has been a predictable letdown. There they are, just as we remembered them: the endless formula fights, varied occasionally by an updated commitment to black consciousness or women's lib. Always the unvarying myth: that someone has to be crushed in order for right to triumph, that fist and gun get things done.

Wheldon reports that he once saw in an American city "five westerns all running against each other at exactly the same time on all five available channels." No wonder he liked to call attention to British alternative choices, so arduously prepared on the low budgets of BBC-2: the "Sartre serial, and the Kirov Ballet and 'Music from King's' and the Danton biography and Charles I and 'The Mind of Man' and the French evening and Janáček's opera and 'Europa' and 'Chronicle' and 'The Money Programme' and 'The World about Us' and the others."

Commercial television in the United States, with all its slick skills and technical virtues, has reached the automatic dead end designed for it by the audience rating system. Local news shows, too, are going

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down for the count as they replace information with entertaining improvisations. Two of the oldest American network programs capable of making a continuing contribution to American culture—"Meet the Press" and "Camera 3"—are now closeted quietly with their audiences on Sunday mornings. It has been a long time since the free-and-easy 1950s, not yet chained to the ratings, when Edward R. Murrow pioneered the weekly in-depth documentary on Tuesday evenings and Fred Coe and Worthington Miner astonished the airwaves with original dramas because something was needed to fill the time. American television, as British observers like to remind us, is the world's best example of perfect competition in communication. All of the three networks are now exactly alike.

Alternative television is another matter. The Public Broadcasting Service—that valiant and hopeful windfall of the last days of Lyndon Johnson's administration—provides the obvious mirror image of British experience: a serious attempt to add to our own traditional (commercial) system the vitalizing force of an innovative (public) channel. Yet PBS lacks the basic protections of the BBC—a tradition of independence from executive power plus the financial security of a license fee.

The Carnegie Commission's 1967 report on educational television proposed a manufacturers' excise tax on TV sets, but this was estimated to raise a maximum of $100,000,000 a year, only one-third of the BBC's budget. A more appropriate annual income would be provided by an automatic per capita formula of annual appropriations, or else a $5 surcharge on everybody's income tax (inapplicable only if the taxpayer checks the statement, "I do not own a TV set"). Without some kind of protected subsidy, public television will remain little more than a microwave skeleton, barely staying alive by consuming old movies and British programs.

The new British empire of cultural communications is a proud creation, a model for the world to follow. Programs seen on the regular home service are further treasures unknown to most Americans. Are we satisfied to buy and watch a few more shows each year, or are the principles behind them worth a closer look? Alternative television, potentially a national treasure of our own, would be so easy to pay for.

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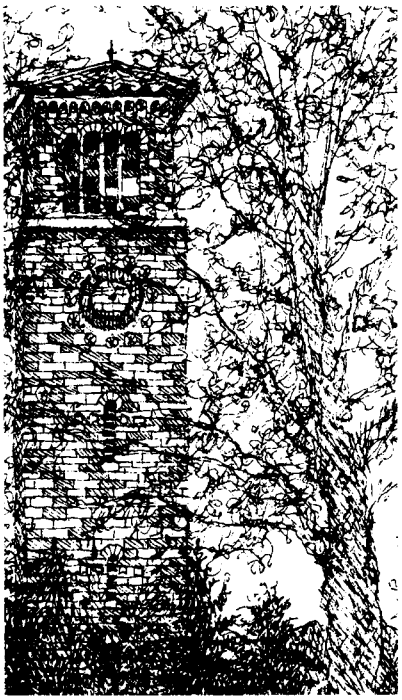

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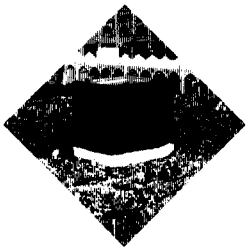

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Misinterpretations

DANIEL HOFFMAN

THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE: A THEORY OF POETRY. *By Harold Bloom. Oxford University Press. $5.95.*

From the titles of Harold Bloom's earlier studies of poetry—*Blake's Apocalypse, Shelley's Mythmaking, The Visionary Company*—one might infer the ambitious scope of his latest book. In *The Anxiety of Influence,* Bloom moves from considerations of a single poet or poetic movement to an effort—daring, difficult and intense—to define the nature of poetic activity itself. This is a book about the poetic vocation. And for Mr. Bloom that vocation is necessarily apocalyptic, visionary and mythopoeic.

Bloom proposes a radical theory, "an antithetical, practical criticism as opposed to all the primary criticisms now in vogue." This is nothing less than an attempt to shoulder aside, as irrelevant to our true understanding of poetry, the reigning academicians of every current school, whether historical, textual, archetypal, formalist, linguistic, or whatever. Mr. Bloom's manner often seems designed more to mystify the reader than to win him; founding his own academy, he lays down its dicta with many a vatic flourish, among clouds of allusions and a singular absence of concrete examples until well into his book. Like Blake, he must invent a new terminology for his visionary truths; and like Yeats, his sources are drawn from a deep well of arcana. The terms by which he designates the various anxieties of influences are borrowed from origins quaint and curious—from Lucretius, from the ancient mystery cults, from Saint Paul and neo-Platonic usage, from the pre-Socratic shamans, and "from the Athenian dismal or unlucky day upon which the dead return to reinhabit the houses in which they had lived."

Such thickets of allusion can make the going rough, yet one cannot but be struck by Mr. Bloom's frequent eloquence and forceful simplicity of statement, as when he writes that "there are no interpretations but only misinterpretations, and so all criticism is prose poetry." Indeed that is how he would wish us, would compel us, to regard his own, prefaced as it is by a free verse cadenza on a text from "Valentius, second-century Gnostic speculator [who] came out of Alexandria to teach the Peroma, the Fullness of thirty Aeons, manifold of Divinity." Mr. Bloom's strophes are struck again in an interchapter midway, and yet again in an epilogue. Here, and throughout his prose text, the critic is drawn to participate in the mythopoesis it is his intention to analyze.

I have itemized these difficulties, if such they be, in the hope of disarming readers of this book in advance; for despite its gestures unattempted yet in prose or rhyme, Mr. Bloom's matter makes itself strongly

✪ DANIEL HOFFMAN served as 1973-74 Consultant in Poetry for the Library of Congress. He is professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. His most recent book of poetry is *The Center of Attention.*

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felt. If one is tempted to resist his sweeping and monistic claims, they do yet have large merits which I should not wish his idiosyncrasies to becloud.

Let it be said that Mr. Bloom begins with a conception of poetic art that is noble, heroic, and, if one may invoke a term not now in fashion, sublime. He is concerned exclusively with those whom he calls "strong" and "authentic" poets, whose work is designed to sublimate "the greatest of all human illusions, the vision of immortality." "Every poet begins (however 'unconsciously') by rebelling more strongly against the consciousness of death's necessity than all other men and women do." The poet's business is the recovery of that vision; and what poet would not wish to be self-created, or to be able so to think of himself, an Adam naming the things of the world for the first time? Poetry, however, begins not in the direct expression of this primary power, but in response to one's awareness of the work of a prior poet. And here commence the multifold anxieties of influence.

> What is the Primal Scene for the poet *as poet*? It is his Poetic Father's coitus with the Muse. There he was begotten? No—there they failed to beget him. He must be self-begotten, he must engender himself upon the Muse his mother. But . . . the strong poet fails to beget himself—he must wait for his Son, who will define him even as he has defined his own Poetic Father. To beget here means to usurp. . . .

Boldly appropriating Freud's paradigm of the family romance for these artistic relationships, Bloom writes that "Poetry is the enchantment of incest, disciplined by resistance to that enchantment." Discovering his own identity through his relationship to the work of his overpowering predecessor, the poet must define himself in terms dictated by the very force he is driven to escape.

For these inexorable reasons Mr. Bloom summarizes his theory in these words:

> Poetic influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist.

From these premises follows the typology of misprision whose names are so curiously derived. *Clinamen* "appears as a corrective movement in [the poem of the influenced poet] which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves." *Tessera* is the completion of the precursor's work in a direction antithetical to its own intentions. *Kenesis* is "a movement toward discontinuity with the precursor," compared to psychological defense mechanisms against repetition compulsions; *daemonization* is the establishment of a "personal Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime"; *askesis*, a truncation of the imaginative bequest of the precursor; and *apophrades* "makes it seem . . . as though the later poet had himself written the precursor's characteristic work."

Although these would seem to cover all imaginable responses to influence, I have called this remarkable analysis a typology rather than an anatomy; for on reflection I conclude—others may differ—that Mr. Bloom's theory, exciting, valuable, and adventurous as it is, does not in fact have quite the universality it claims, despite the author's protecting himself from such animadversions by so defining "strong, authentic poets" that those whom the theory will not fit can be dismissed as neither authentic nor strong enough to be its subjects.

It might be supposed that a general theory of poetry in English should be tested by its applicability to Shakespeare, but Mr. Bloom specifically excludes the greatest poet from his rubric. For one thing, Shakespeare's strength simply overpowers the example of his poetic father, Marlowe; for another, the theory works only with post-Renaissance poets. Bloom observes that whereas Ben Jonson could regard influence as benign and a filial relationship to pred-

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ecessors as healthy, Dr. Johnson was already obsessed by anxieties on these counts. For Mr. Bloom the first modern poet is Milton's Satan, "while God is his dead but still embarrassingly potent and present ancestor, or rather, ancestral poet." Bloom traces a double line of descent (both of succession and of diminution), one a ruminative line from Milton through Wordsworth to Keats and Stevens; the other a visionary and prophetic line from Spenser on "down through the various fiercenesses of Blake, Shelley, Browning, Whitman, and Yeats." He inserts Emerson and Dickinson among the visionaries, but Tennyson is not among the ruminators.

It will be seen that there is no place among these authentic talents for Dryden, Pope, Byron, the modernist masters Pound and Eliot, nor for Auden. Among Bloom's six types of misprision neither parody nor satire appear—inferior forms, parasitic upon strong originals; nor is comedy a type of the visionary imagination.

Bloom's theory also requires that the poet-critics customarily regarded as of first magnitude—Johnson, Coleridge, Arnold and Eliot—be relegated to second intensity or less, insofar as their criticism is correct, since critical accuracy betokens a lack of their own strength. No strong poet, he maintains, can objectively read any other strong poet: there are only misreadings, in prose as well as verse. Like all of Mr. Bloom's assumptions, this one is very perceptive and more generally true than has been admitted; but, also like all of his assumptions, it is no more a universal law than is its opposite. Whatever the universals of visionary or ruminative poetry, the state of taste and therefore of understanding is in constant flux, as comparing typical anthologies of any two generations reveals (say, the *Oxford Anthologies* by "Q" and by Dame Helen Gardner). If a strong poet, writing on an authentic predecessor, reads him in a way different from those current in his time (say, Eliot on Baudelaire), it seems a bit captious or even perverse to insist that this reading is in fact a misinterpretation—granting that no criticism can encompass the full accomplishment of a strong poet's work. Strong criticism can reveal a neglected aspect of authentic poetry, and if that aspect—as is usually the case with authoritative poet-critics—corresponds in some way to the intentions of the critic himself, whether he swerves from it, completes it, opposes or deviates from it in some fashion of his own, nevertheless his interpretation has enlarged our apprehension of the achievement of his forebear. Mr. Bloom may grant all this, or some of it, but his vocabulary of *misprision, misinterpretation, perverse and wilful revisionism, distortion, caricature,* and the like, is so pejorative that it may inhibit this astute critic from expressing the range of sympathy he actually feels.

The possibility that influence can be a benign relationship, however, relatively free from the anxieties his book enumerates, does not pass through Mr. Bloom's critical apparatus. The reason for this, and the source of one's difficulties with his thesis, may well be his assumption of the superior authority of the Poetic Father. Its concomitant is that there is, for each poet, usually but one father figure. Thus Marlowe is "the precursor" of Shakespeare, who skimmed off the cruder dramaturgy, themes, characters, plots and preoccupations also of Kyd, Greene, Jonson, Dekker and other predecessors and contemporaries, all to be refined and recast in his plays, just as his sonnets and lyrics are the fulfillment of what shoals of Petrarchans, madrigalists, and silver lyricists of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods were writing.

The theory of misprision assumes that influence *is* anxiety, that the new poem is the expression not of the escape from anxiety but of the poet's anxiety itself. Again, there is much truth here, but not all truth. What is left out has to do with the role in poetry of conventions, most often learned not from one master but from many. Once a multiplicity of influences is admitted, the psychic intensity of the poet's indebtedness is necessarily diminished and diffused. Yet it is this particular psychic intensity that is for Mr. Bloom the root source of poetic energy.

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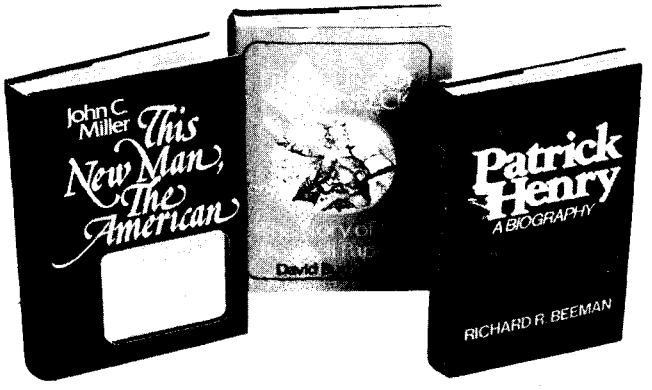

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The paradigm of this pattern of poetic descent from a single father seems to be not in the history of poetry but rather in that of psychiatry, with Freud in the father role here assigned to Milton, and his disciples—Jung, Rank, Kerenyi, Adler, Lacan, et cetera—each defining his own place by a misprision of the master, emphasizing a psychic conflict that Freud failed adequately to consider, or otherwise clearing a space for his own work and identity.

Accordingly, in the poet's family romance, the erotic impulse itself is not a primary source of creative strength. Mr. Bloom's version of that romance is remorselessly fastened to the father-son relationship; Oedipus in his struggle to free himself from the ghost of Laius, rather than Orpheus trying to restore Eurydice to the living, is the patron of the authentic poet here.

Urania is not a venal Muse, however, and for Mr. Bloom, poetic authenticity requires a visionary and apocalyptic *donnée*. This is to say, poetic vision is ultimately based upon a cosmogony, an interpretation not of mere experience but of the structure of the universe. While acknowledging the singular power of the visionary strain in Anglo-American poetry, one may acknowledge also its dangers—its immanent tendencies to solipsism, to spiritual narcissism, and to a detachment from history. By arguing with such polemical force, Mr. Bloom has perhaps designedly exaggerated his case. While it is true that the creative problems of a poet are determined by his inner necessities, is it therefore also true that these necessities exist independently of his historical circumstances? Given the need to provide a cosmogony, can we infer that that need is felt in the same way by Milton, Blake and Yeats, when Milton could still inherit the medieval synthesis as though it described reality, while Blake and Yeats, by historical circumstance, are deprived of that great consolatory design and must, by individual will, construct their equivalents of a universal order that the culture of Europe had made available to Milton?

One is tempted to quote in this connection a passage from Shelley that Mr. Bloom has used in another connection:

> A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. . . . Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and in another, the creations of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape.

For Mr. Bloom, "Shelley's subjection, as he knew, was to the precursor who had created . . . the Spirit of the Age. Against Wordsworth, Shelley became a strong poet." By conflating what Shelley described as "internal powers" and "external influences" into the presence of the precursor, Mr. Bloom presents Shelley himself as the product of a single subjection, rather than as both the creator and the creation of his time. In reading the history of poetry so exclusively as the strained relationship of ephebes and their poetic fathers, Mr. Bloom leaves out not only the history of ideas but also the idea of history and its influence upon the inner life of each poet.

A result of this intense monism is a variant, in his criticism, of the *askesis* by which Mr. Bloom shows us poets defining themselves at the expense of the full recognition of their precursors' endowments. If *The Anxiety of Influence* is to provide "a practical criticism as opposed to all the primary criticisms now in vogue," its theories will have to be shown useful in the elucidation of particular texts. For most of his book Mr. Bloom does not discuss examples, although to be sure, those he does offer from the Romantic poets seem especially well chosen to exhibit anxious indebtedness. But there are problems. Take, for instance, the final type of misprision, in which strong poets are found to have achieved "a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their predecessors, so that the tyranny of time is almost overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being *imitated by their ancestors*." What this means is that Yeats has so absorbed Shelley that Shelley

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can on occasion write lines which seem as though he "has read too deeply in Yeats."

But this principle turns out to be all too close to impressionistic criticism, as when Mr. Bloom severely faults the late Roethke for not having imitated Yeats, Eliot or Stevens so successfully that any of them have passages "that can strike us as having been written by Roethke"; whereas so profoundly has John Ashbery, in an early poem, absorbed the tones and tunes of Stevens that "When I read *Le Monocle de Mon Oncle* now . . . I am compelled to hear Ashbery's voice." Yet, reading the younger poet's "Fragment," Bloom claims "I tend not to be aware of Stevens for his presence has been rendered benign." My own response to the latter example is just the opposite, nor do I find it necessary to denigrate Roethke's work in using partly derived cadences for poems no one could mistake for those of his stylistic models. That they failed to anticipate what uses he might make of their influence seems a questionable tenet for critical discrimination.

One of the uses of "a practical criticism" must be to make such useful discriminations among contemporary poets, whose strengths and authenticities are not yet a matter of common consent. Mr. Bloom is at his best among the poets of the nineteenth century; the closer he comes to our own time, the more subjective his discriminations seem, although in all cases they are the logical extensions of his Romantic premises. I think a real danger in these premises is his nearly obsessional insistence upon the priority of Fathers. Since the present book offers relatively few concrete examples, I turn to his *Yeats* (1970), in which the theoretical bases of the work under review are already obvious. Yeats's work demonstrates "the austere and terrible melancholy of Poetic Influence" within romanticism, and the poet's considerable dependencies upon Blake and Shelley are "an overtly defining element" in the meaning of his work.

Much is to be gained by considering Yeats as an heir to the Romantics, and so dissociating him from his own contemporaries, his own country, and the history of its culture and his times; but some valuable things are lost by doing so. The greatest loss is the resultant diminution of Yeats's own originality, strength and authenticity when each of his works is interpreted as a misprision of its sources. By imposing upon Yeats's intentions those of Blake or Shelley, whatever he achieves that differs from their accomplishment is seen as a distortion, a misreading, a swerving away from an already fully formed and fully expressed vision. This reductive process seems to me to commit the fallacy of the old historical scholarship in a new guise: by elucidating the sources you have explained the poem, or what the poem should have been.

But the borrowings and thefts of a strong poet are not so slavish as this; he can pick an image from a predecessor's pocket without also having to wear the precursor's trousers, cummerbund and walking stick. Indeed, the very relationships outlined by Mr. Bloom's typology may constitute as much of strength and independence as they do of submission to authority. Whitman, borrowing the cadences of the Old Testament, and Dickinson borrowing those of the hymnal, are being authentic and original in the uses to which they put these debts. Such are the creative uses of one's patrimony.

In his summary of his book, quoted above, Mr. Bloom speaks of the "perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist." "Modern poetry as such" means the succession of visionary, authentic voices from Wordsworth through Ashbery and A. R. Ammons. Such tenets of the modernist movement—the dominant poetry of the first half of this century—as "make it new," "no ideas but in things," "technique is the test of a man's sincerity," and "poetry is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality"—these dogmas are of no account here. Indeed, there seems, from generation to generation, less and less chance of an ephebe with a vision so authentic and so free from the diminishing anxieties of influence that the likes of Shelley, much less

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of Milton, can be seen in our time and after. When we recall that for Mr. Bloom the first modern poet was not Milton, but Milton's Satan, the inexorable diminution of achievement his book prescribes, and its insistence upon the domination of Fathers, become comprehensible.

It all begins with the nature of the poetic act. If poetic authenticity adheres in the absolutely truthful description of reality, as Pound and Williams have told us; if, as Stevens has said, in the presence of catastrophe imagination is replaced by observation; if poetry of first intensity has legitimate concern with the interpretation of human nature in its present historical circumstances, then it is hard to imagine why the gene-bank of English-speaking mankind might not produce yet another poet of magnitude, perhaps a great poet. But if all the foregoing is of small account, if the poetic act requires an autonomous imagination of such intensity that it can, indeed must, reveal the soul's vision of itself, a vision immutable and outside of time, then the anxieties which Mr. Bloom so eloquently summons become the necessary conditions—and the necessary inhibitions—to the creative vision. For the visionary truth at which such a poet must aim is an ahistorical truth—a deeply narcissistic and solipsistic construct of his own inner reality. But it isn't merely, or supremely, his own; it is the inner reality that his poetic forebears back beyond Milton to Milton's Satan have already made theirs, not his.

And so to all six of the anxieties of influence there is yet another, perhaps still greater anxiety than those Mr. Bloom has named: the terrible burden of consciously rivaling Satan in rivaling God the Father, proposing a personal vision to replace His vision, the unacceptable truth. Even though, as Stevens told us, "the death of one god was the death of all," to be—as Shelley required—a prophet of a new faith, or, as Emerson advised, to reclaim for one's manhood one's lost godhood—this gesture, this titanic act of poetic imagination is shrouded in the unassuageable guilt of the rebellious son. And it will be seen that the relationship between ephebe and Poetic Father is but a displacement of this first rebellion, adding its guilt to all the other anxieties of influence.

All this is true—but only for those for whom the premises described are in fact the conditions of creative thought. Suppose a poet not so intimidated by the imagined vengeance of an offended father, whether God, paterfamilias, or poetic predecessor; suppose him capable of imagining a cosmos of atoms or of self-duplicating neo-Platonic essences without walking in fear of that which lies between Genesis and Revelation; or yet again, suppose a poet still capable of accepting Revelation and even Genesis as the revealed structure of the universe and of our destinies. No man escapes anxiety or guilt, but for such a case—not wholly supposititious—creative intensity, although inevitably bearing the wounds of his human condition, need not be so laboriously inhibited by the roster of misprisions as Mr. Bloom's book suggests. What his *Anxiety of Influence* does not suggest is that a poetic influence can be lovingly devoured,

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digested, and, like bodily food, transformed into the very fiber of the being of the one who has been nourished upon it.

What seem to me flaws in the argument of *The Anxiety of Influence* are, however, matters of emphasis rather than of substance. That the anxieties Mr. Bloom demonstrates are real, and that criticism has hitherto neglected them, no one can deny. My demurrers concern the degree to which their existence should be taken as a supplanting, rather than a supplementing, of other ways of regarding poets and their poems; and my reservations concern the applicability of the thesis to poetry outside the tradition with which Mr. Bloom is most familiar. His authoritative command of the Romantic tradition in English has enabled him to write this impassioned and cranky tract, which all serious readers of poetry will have to read and whose argument all subsequent interpretations of the art of poetry will be obliged to take into account.

Letting the Facts Speak for Themselves: Thirties America

MILES ORVELL

PORTRAIT OF A DECADE: ROY STRYKER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE THIRTIES. *By F. Jack Hurley. Photographic editing by Robert J. Doherty. Louisiana State University Press. $12.95.*

THE DREAM AND THE DEAL: THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT, 1935-1943. *By Jerre Mangione. Little, Brown and Company. $12.50.*

DOCUMENTARY EXPRESSION AND THIRTIES AMERICA. *By William Stott. Oxford University Press. $12.50.*

During the thirties, as if in response to a long dormant Whitmanesque imperative, facts were being vivified, and the common man—long forgotten—emerged as central to America's self-image. Photographers drifted around the country, recording faces, houses, city streets and farm lands; writers excavated facts and legends, listened to people talk; guidebooks ordered the countryside; the theater came to town with "living newsreels." And, remarkably, the government was paying the bill. What had brought the artist from his more customary subversive or expatriate or aesthetic outpost during the twenties into the mainstream of American life? What had allowed this astounding collaboration of government and artist, and was it in the name of the artist, the government, or the people? What was the power of actuality being discovered, and how did it change the way Americans saw their country, and the way artists saw their work?

Three recent books address themselves to these questions and help round out the cultural rediscovery of the thirties that has been taking place over the last ten years. Two of them—F. Jack Hurley's *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties,* and Jerre Mangione's *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943*—take roughly parallel approaches to their respective subjects, staying close to facts and personalities, chronicling the agencies that fostered, for a time, the documentation of America. The third, William Stott's *Documentary Ex-*

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pression and Thirties America, though dealing with some of the same matter, has an altogether different purpose, in attempting to define aesthetically the nature of documentary, to describe the various media evincing this mode, and to evaluate the relative success of works and practitioners.

Stott divides his subject into four parts: the first dealing with the rhetoric of documentary, the second with the centrality of the "documentary motive" to the fabric of thirties life (FDR—our first documentary president), the third with varieties of documentary nonfiction during the decade, and the fourth with the surpassing achievement of Walker Evans and James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* The first part, which one would like to be the strongest, is disappointingly the weakest. Stott claims that there are two extremes of documentary —the objective, "official" kind (things like timetables, cards, almanacs, newspapers) and the "human" or personal kind, offering a glimpse of "an inner existence, a private self." And he affirms that in thirties documentary "emotion counted more than fact." Here and elsewhere, however, Stott seems trammeled by his false dichotomies. Documents, after all, are not documentary: facts—the "content"—are naturally a part of documentary expression, but they are used characteristically to convey emotion in the interests of persuasion. We read that "the heart of documentary is not form or style or medium, but always content." Form and style are, it seems to me, very much at the heart of documentary's effect on the reader or viewer. Consider, for example, the convention of billboard irony in so many photographs of the period: "Next time try the train. Relax," a sign reads along a road traversed by two vagrants.

But Stott's originality lies in his very enterprise of considering the common properties of such diverse forms as photography, radio, film, reportage, first-person narrative, even dance; and his central point—that documentary in whatever medium is as distinct a genre as epic or tragedy, but one in which the content is assumed to be true—is most valuable. Yet when it comes to defining the differences between the various forms, we get such simplistic pronouncements as: Writing is ". . . more obviously prejudiced. A photograph is made from ingredients in the world; writing is made of words"; or else: Documentary is "fiction's opposite." (Later this is apparently modified: "There can be no question that Proletarian fiction was part of the thirties documentary movement.")

Stott is much better when he explores the pervasive influence of the documentary mode on the culture of the thirties, including such figures as Edward R. Murrow and Martha Graham. Although he does not sentimentalize the depression, Stott affirms that it was a time when "attention was paid," and that the documentary imagination—in newsreels, photo-magazines, WPA guidebooks, and especially radio—helped hold the social order together. Still, if documentary was a cohesive force, some apparent inconsistencies remain in Stott's account of its diverse effects. Where the Federal Theater epics, for example, tended toward allegorized characterizations—Fruit Vendor, Financier, Policeman—the Farm Security Administration photographers and the compilers of personal life histories sought the telling particular instance. And if we admit that these forms all are interested finally in the *typical,* how can we square this with the unmitigated particularity of the Writers' Project guidebooks, in which the bizarre fact, the idiosyncratic local feature, in short the *atypical,* was pursued with the treasure hunter's zeal? Two contrary forces, it seems to me, were pulling within the documentary imagination: an urge to encompass as much as possible (the collectivist, or federalist mentality), to generalize experience; and an opposite urge to affirm the intensely regional, the personal, that which is individualistic. These contraries are of course as old as America; they come into full play, held in suspension, in the poet-prophet of documentary, Walt Whitman.

In part three, Stott examines documentary nonfiction, by which he means the multitudinous case studies, social science writing, reportage, worker narratives, and travel books of the I've-seen-America type—all of which were attempts to understand what

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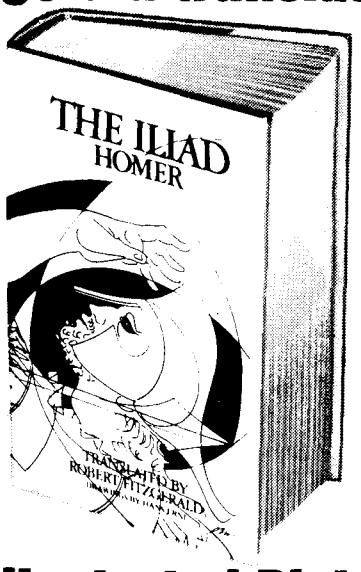

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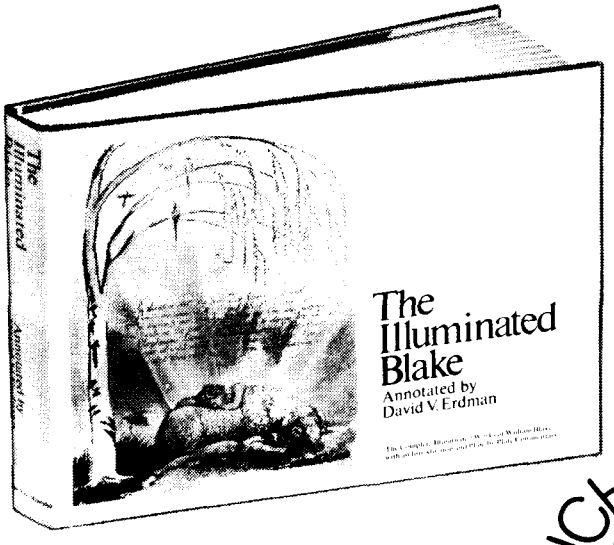

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was happening to America during the depression. Here the discussions of particular examples are better than the intermittent and confusing efforts to discriminate the various types; indeed the prefatory discussion uses a terminology different from the chapter headings themselves. Stott's characteristic observation is that documentary is most effective at the "limit" of documentation, that is, where the observer finds himself nonplused before the facts (for example, Sherwood Anderson's *Puzzled America*). One of the principal subjects in this section on "nonfiction" is the photo-documentary book, and precisely its hybrid nature—the relationship between text and photos—could have been more fully explored. Still, the treatment of Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor's *An American Exodus* is very good, and Stott quite rightly, I think, censures the work of Margaret Bourke-White, whose camera seems always to be aimed baroquely upward or downward, waiting anxiously for the garish moment—photography as opera.

Yet many of the famous thirties photographs have a stagy quality—as if they were stills from a motion picture. And for good reason, as one can discover from Arthur Rothstein's account of one of his most famous dust bowl shots: "The little boy was asked to drop back and hold his hand over his eyes. The farmer was asked to lean forward as he walked. Finally the whole scene was made to take place in front of the shed" (*The Complete Photographer,* 1942). All in the name of realism.

As the diverse responses recorded during the 1938 International Photographic Exhibition make clear, the line between acceptable and unacceptable bias in documentary expression is extremely hard to draw: "Purely propaganda for Communism," "They create a false impression"; "The best pictures in the whole damn show," "The most vital photography in America." Is it simply a matter of one man's art being another man's propaganda? Stott touches on this question repeatedly in *Documentary Expression* but does not much clarify the problem. He criticizes Malcolm Cowley for sweeping aside, during the thirties, the eternal opposition of art and propaganda, but himself declares that *The Grapes of Wrath* is "honest propaganda" (some at least did not think so when it came out) and that a very few documentary works "transcend the documentary genre" and are capable of "permanent revelations of the spirit." Must the genre be "transcended" to be significant? This sort of talk tends to undermine the whole effort to establish documentary as a genre in its own right, with its own parameters.

Stott saves for last his celebration of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* and his discussion is very good indeed. He dismisses a number of claims made for the unity of the text (some by Agee himself), and affirms instead that "the form imitates the process of consciousness" laboring to understand the sharecroppers' world. Building on Alfred Kazin's observation in *On Native Grounds* that Agee's documentary evolved into an attack on the facile mechanics of the genre, Stott demonstrates how the standard documentary methods and values are subverted in *Famous Men,* the result being however a work that paradoxically fulfills the documentary promise, in revealing, to use Agee's phrase, the "cruel radiance of what is." Yet Agee's text and Evans's photos—like the men themselves—prove self-willed and intractable, and at times Stott's rhetoric becomes overly pliant. For Evans, Stott says, documentary is "actuality untouched." Whatever that may mean is not clarified when Stott attempts to deal with George P. Elliott's observation on the irony of aesthetic elegance in documentary photography, an elegance that exists "only in the picture and not in the scene." Stott admits that the tenants were unaware of the "beauty" of their homes, but says nevertheless that it is not a fictitious beauty, that it is "in" the scene—"though it takes an outsider's eye to behold it." This argument is not helped when Stott quotes, straight-faced, Agee's effusive observation that "the partition wall of the Gudgers' front bedroom is importantly, among other things, a great tragic poem." (One likes Agee in spite of such sentences.) It is because *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* is so interesting a book, and so original in its effort, that one wishes it were better.

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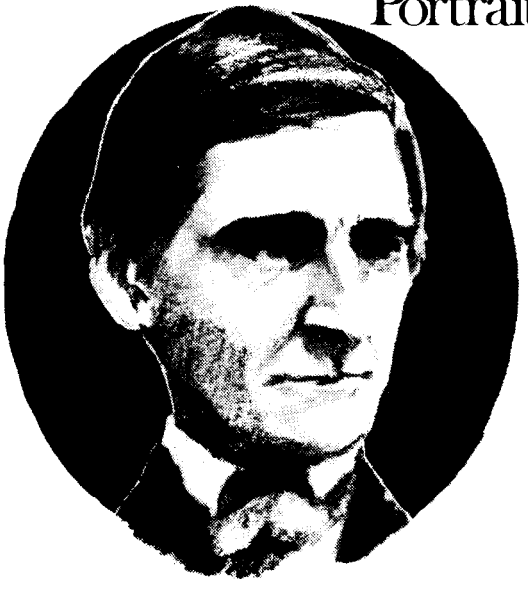

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Reading F. Jack Hurley's study of Roy Stryker and the Farm Security Administration photographers, and Jerre Mangione's history of the Federal Writers' Project, one is struck by the singular and fertile partnership, during the thirties, of artist, administrator and bureaucracy. The artist's own view of America and the New Deal's view were not always congruent, but they were close enough for an honest collaboration. Moreover, fortunately, the directors of both projects—Stryker at the historical section of the FSA, Henry Alsberg at the Writers' Project—were interested not only in amassing information, but in encouraging artistic excellence as well.

Stryker's role, according to Hurley, was as intermediary between the government and the photographer in the field, and as teacher: he would insist that the photographer have adequate knowledge of the geographic and economic facts of the region he was working in, and that he prepare in advance a "shooting script," listing the kinds of shots needed. His promptings resulted, according to Hurley, in the sense of informed purpose that distinguishes the work of the FSA group—Carl Mydans, Russel Lee, Ben Shahn, Rothstein, Lange and Evans, among others—from that of other period photographers. Stryker seems also, from Hurley's account, to have known his limitations, and while he would offer advice and instruction relevant to the promotion of various agency programs ("Get us some good slum pictures," he once directed Lange), he was after photographs that would compete artistically with the best of the period, and wisely allowed the unit their personal styles.

Hurley appears to give us all the facts of Stryker's career, but he seems not to have made the most of his subject. If Stryker had any definite notions about documentary photography, they are barely visible. (Stryker himself took no photographs; one would like to know more about this amazing continence.) Each of the photographers working for the agency receives brief consideration, but Hurley is not very much interested in examining their works beyond a few generalities, nor does he explore the knotty questions involved in the photographer's manipulation of his subject, and in the limits of governmental self-advertisement. We are given some information on the way photographers worked in the field, and on the problems they encountered from occasionally hostile folk, but not enough. Nor is the thinness of Hurley's treatment helped by a style that is repetitious and that drops occasionally to the level of callow melodrama: "When Roy Stryker bundled his bride onto a train and headed for New York City in 1921, the future held many questions."

The Writers' Project, unlike the far smaller and far more select photography unit, was a part of the WPA, and was set up in 1935—in response to pressure from several writers' groups—to provide employment for editors, researchers, writers. As it happened, however, most of those employed (at its peak in 1936, more than six thousand) had little writing experience, including, according to Jerre Mangione, at least one "elderly Egyptian who claimed to be a hundred and twenty years old and was completely illiterate." Whoever first had the idea to set them all to work on a series of guidebooks to the states (and apparently several had made the proposal until the right cocktail party finally brought it to fruition), it was a splendid one: the program was nationwide, it required diverse skills, and it would result in products with presumed mass appeal. Many already famous and yet-to-be-known writers were employed by the Project—Conrad Aiken, Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Edward Dahlberg, Ralph Ellison, David Ignatow, Claude McKay, Harold Rosenberg, Richard Wright—and yet, with only ten percent of the staff consisting of nonrelief professionals, with the most talented writers wanting to work in New York City or Chicago, with state directors having to deal with workers in the field and with often inscrutable editorial instructions from Washington, with suspicious congressmen sniffing Communism, with all this working against it, the final tabulation of Project publications is extraordinary: not only the state and regional guides, but collections of folklore, ethnic studies, guides to cities

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and towns, books on wildlife and pamphlets on scores of miscellaneous subjects.

Mangione was himself national coordinating editor of the Project (in charge of securing publishers for the various volumes), and he writes with the insider's authority, fulfilling Bernard De Voto's prediction in 1938 that the story of the Project "will make, if it is ever told frankly, a saga highlighted with tragedy and farce." Take, for example, the events preceding the resignation of Orrick Johns from his post as director of the New York City Project. Johns, a one-legged poet, was having an affair with a woman whose boyfriend, a seaman, had been denied a Project job; in revenge, the inflamed seaman beat Johns unconscious and set his wooden leg afire with brandy. Or take the retirement party for the supposedly benign old Communist, Edwin P. Banta, who solicited comradely signatures from over a hundred coworkers to be inscribed in his gift book—*The People's Front,* by Earl Browder. Banta was in fact a right-wing informer, and the book, along with Banta's testimony, provided ammunition for the Dies Committee. Whether or not the Project as a whole evidenced left-wing bias, this committee—which tended to equate culture with Communism, and one of whose members complained that the New Jersey guide "is written as if there had been trouble between labor and capital"—would hardly be in a position to tell.

The Dream and the Deal reads like a WPA guide itself—full of particulars, rich in characters and lore. But this is its limitation as well. Mangione fleshes out considerably the plainer account of the Project in William F. McDonald's encyclopedic *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (1969), but he has little to say about the guides themselves. In one brief chapter at the end he considers their features, virtues, and role in American culture, but his treatment characteristically consists of reflections on the opinions of others—Robert Cantwell, Lewis Mumford, De Voto. Mangione affirms the merit of the state guides over the local guides; he endorses the value of the general introductory essays that preface each volume (otherwise consisting of detailed tours of the area; this was a much-debated feature of the state guides); he calls attention to the achievement of the Life in America series, especially to the volume of personal narratives, *These Are Our Lives;* he remarks the role the guides had in awakening our national consciousness and our pride, in repossessing the American past—but it is all too cursory.

It is indeed sad, as Mangione observes, that with the war seizing all attention, and with the widespread suspicion of anything having to do with the WPA at the end of the decade, the guides and other works of the Project have had so little impact on American culture. (Might they not, if absorbed into the mainstream, have lessened the long-standing breach between mass culture and high culture?) Yet today, with the best-selling oral histories of Studs Terkel (a veteran of the Chicago Project's radio division), with historians turning more and more to exploring the past through local communities and the everyday life of working people, with our sense that regional and ethnic differences are worth preserving, with the government once again cultivating and dispersing the arts, with the widespread practice of new journalism, we are to some extent recapturing the ground lost since the thirties. These three books contribute much to that long-needed understanding and repossession of the documentary imagination of the period, but there is still some way to go.

Death Made Stranger

WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH. From the Middle Ages to the Present. *By Philippe Ariès. Johns Hopkins University Press. $6.50.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY KLEIN

Throughout the Middle Ages death was treated simply and practically. A dying man (or woman) typically took to bed when he sensed his end approaching. Around him

JEFFREY KLEIN has written for several magazines and taught at San Francisco State University. He has just finished a novel, *Between Funerals.*

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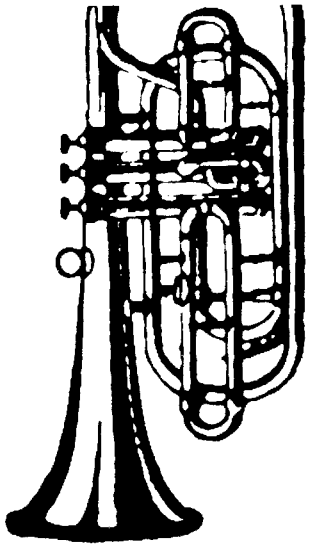
would gather his wife, parents, children, friends, neighbors, even strangers who had accompanied the priest to the bedchamber. The ceremony that followed was organized by the dying man himself: he lamented his passing, forgave his companions, publicly confessed his sins, asked for salvation, received absolution, then died. The ritual had a set order and tone—the protocol was observed calmly with no great show of emotion.

Burial was even simpler. The body was entrusted to the saints and interred within the church's huge courtyard, often in a mass grave. Tombstones were usually anonymous; the ground itself hardly sacred. Indeed, various church councils had to forbid dancing, gambling, music and mummery on church grounds. The cemetery had become the town meeting place. Shops and merchants lined the cemetery arcades; on second-floor galleries old skulls and limbs were artistically displayed.

> The old attitude in which death was both familiar and near, evoking no great fear or awe, offers too great a contrast to ours, where death is so frightful that we dare not utter its name. This is why I have called this household [medieval] sort of death "tamed death." I do not mean that death had once been wild and that it ceased to be so. I mean, on the contrary, that today it has become wild.

So writes, or rather speaks, Philippe Ariès, in *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present,* four elegant lectures he gave at Johns Hopkins University in April 1973. M. Ariès believes the first modifications in a millennium of stable death occurred in the Christian Middle Ages. He cites Last Judgment tympana of cathedrals that show a separation of the just and the damned. It was no longer sufficient to die belonging to the Church—each soul was now individually weighed. *Artes moriendi* woodcuts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries indicate that this judgment then shifted from the day of resurrection to the moment of death: demons, invisible to all bystanders, tempt the dying man while God and his court of angels look on. Burial also became increas-

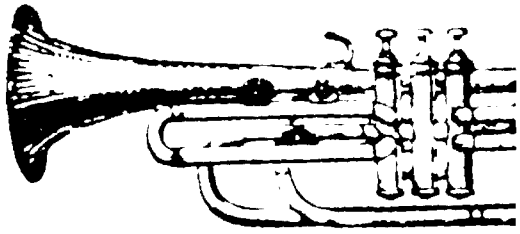


For the Ives centennial —

Charles Ives and the American Mind

by Rosalie Sandra Perry

A study that relates Ives' unique musical ideas to the American philosophical and social roots from which they sprang. "Dr. Perry is to be commended," says Gilbert Chase in his Introduction, "for undertaking in such a comprehensive framework the most challenging and difficult task that faces the historian of American music today: 'To treat music as a functioning part of a wider whole.'" $7.50



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ingly individualized. The rich and the famous built monumental tombs. Artisans had their "here lies," or portrait before Christ, or church donation inscribed on plaques. Even in the macabre cadaver art of the period, Ariès sees not (like Huizinga) a moral crisis, but rather (like Tenenti) a love of life which man discovered most vividly in his own decay.

By the eighteenth century the calm ritual led by the dying person had developed into a theater of hysteria dominated by the mourners. Ariès believes that the transition occurred first in art and literature, where death raped the living. Simultaneously, as this erotic theme took hold, it was sublimated into the idea of Death as Beauty. Ariès shows the results of this transition much more clearly than the causes. He documents the shift in cemeteries as people held on to bodies, then buried them on their own property, or else created homelike graves that they visited frequently. The new cult of memory had public aspects as well—burgeoning graveyards appeared as community gardens, countries erected grand tombs for their heroes or war dead.

Why did this dramatic death of the romantic era evolve into our technological expiration in hospitals? How were public displays of grief silenced so quickly by our happy age where any significant mourning is considered morbid? Ariès believes that romantic pomp merely disguised the weakening of old familiar ties. It is no great distance, he feels, from sparing the dying person the burden of his death to sparing society the idea of death. In both cases, the raw facts of mortality are denied. "And surprise! Our life is not as a result gladdened!"

Western Attitudes toward Death is a stunning little book. In his *Centuries of Childhood,* Ariès attacked a widely held stereotype; while everyone complained that the modern family was falling apart, Ariès showed that (as a concept, at least) it had just gotten together. These four death lectures are remarkable not for their iconoclasm, but for their simple and comprehensive synthesis of what is already in the literature. In less than a hundred pages of text, Ariès covers fifteen hundred years. He has obviously streamlined his argument for the sake of rhetoric, yet not with any evident anxiety to be right. Throughout he maintains the dignity, precision and leisurely pace of a *philosophe.*

Because Ariès is the master of his material, because his thesis is so interesting and plausible, the reader wants M. Ariès to be right. I found myself searching not for counterexamples, but for reasons behind our changed attitudes toward death. Since death was more physically painful in the Middle Ages, why do we need such a protective stance today? Of course Ariès's argument asks for both attacking and supportive questions. His brief history of a cultural norm basically treats all classes and Western countries together. He does not have the space to note, for instance, that England—where mourning today is almost forbidden—was where death romanticism flourished most. Victorians bought black mourning teapots and rented hearses priced according to the number of horses. All classes then stretched their budgets for a proper (propertied) funeral. Yet this was precisely the time when rich and poor were suffering such different deaths. Were genteel attitudes toward death meant to mitigate gross class inequities?

M. Ariès wanted to present these lectures in America because he sensed our country's seminal influence in the advent of the happy death. Here embalming and viewing of lifelike dead grew into productions headed by funeral directors. Somehow, however, our "characteristic mixture of commerce and idealism" prevented the total censoring of death, a cultural virus now spreading throughout Europe. Ariès sees healthy resistance to this censorship in America today, particularly in the growing paramedical literature and discussions about death.

Philippe Ariès has added a senior voice to these discussions. His historical analyses are supported by a moral authority—indeed his moral judgments probably motivated his research. He explicitly prefers Western attitudes toward death *in* the Middle Ages. I suspect he has made the changes

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since then extremely comprehensible so that those earlier attitudes will seem within our reach. Ariès would have us countenance death, just as others have urged us to face madness. Both appeals, however reasonable, are subversive; both death and madness threaten our relentless progress-profit-achievement ethos. These lectures are thus welcome and suspect. Can history be this simple? Was death really not feared then? Fuller studies will no doubt follow in the wake of this one, perhaps another book by M. Ariès himself. Meanwhile many readers will savor these lectures, and hear within them echoes of a less alienated time.

Toward a Newer Criticism

USES OF LITERATURE. Harvard English Studies 4. *Edited by Monroe Engel. Harvard University Press. $12.50; paper, $3.95.*

Reviewed by HANA WIRTH-NESHER

"For poetry makes nothing happen," wrote W. H. Auden, and his line has served as the implicit credo in many an English department over the past two decades. To believe in the autonomy of the world of art, to enter the sacred text through the rites of symbolism, paradox, or structure, to delight in a world wholly self-referential removes from the student or scholar of language the onus of moral statement, the need to relate the works to a time-bound cultural context. It is a way of retaining innocence at the price of impotence.

For New Criticism, a catchword for literary analysis that concentrates on the behavior of words and rhetoric in a closed system, the notion of the function of a work of art is heresy. That the Harvard English Studies fourth annual volume of essays has been published under the title of *Uses of*

HANA WIRTH-NESHER, a Danforth Kent Fellow in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where she teaches, is currently at work on a study of Henry James and Virginia Woolf. Her articles have appeared in various journals.

The Imagination of Maurice Barrès

Philip Ouston

This study is concerned with the nature and development of Barrès's imagination, with his views about the part played by imagination in human thought and in spiritual life in general, and with his methods for maintaining or reawakening the imaginative attitudes to life he thought essential for spiritual health. $16.50

The Rural Tradition

A Study of the Non-Fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside

W. J. Keith

Professor Keith argues that non-fiction rural prose should be recognized as a distinct literary tradition, and tests the cogency of his argument in this study of eleven writers from the seventeenth century to modern times. These include Izaak Walton, Mary Russell Mitford, Richard Jefferies, George Sturt, and H. J. Massingham. $15.00

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An Exploration Eleanor Cook

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Literature not only commits that sin of heresy, but also undermines formerly cherished concepts about the border between art and life. It is welcome.

Although New Criticism was initially invaluable for liberating works of art from outmoded historical analyses and restoring them to center stage for language analysis, its less perceptive practitioners, with the zeal of converts, "cut the cable," to use Henry James's analogy, that ties the "balloon of experience" with its "car of imagination" to earth. Several authors of these Harvard essays sound as though they woke up one morning and found themselves cut adrift, uneasy about the view, unhappy about the company, and anxious to renew their ties with earth, or, as some call it, "the sources of life."

This is not the first time that formalism has come under attack, nor has it ever ruled the terrain in English studies unchallenged. The criticism of Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling and Irving Howe, for example, has been concerned with the relation of literature to society, and each critic expresses the tenuous connection between artistic expression and human morality. Skepticism has come from within the ranks of the new critical movement as well. In an essay written in 1950, "The Lion and the Honeycomb," R. P. Blackmur called the "new criticism" well enough established "to have a public odor of disrepute about it" and he reminded critics that "the force behind art exists outside art." More recently, Richard Poirier in *The Performing Self* has lamented the packaging of some aspects of New Criticism for class consumption and the overemphasis on the study of rigid "works" rather than a feeling for the "writing," which he calls "an act in which there are various and mysterious exertions of vitality." His observations reflect the impact on American academics of French structuralism, a mixed blessing that can expose "eternal truths" as historical contingencies, but can also reduce art to scientific formula. A number of the contributions in *Uses of Literature* are such mixed blessings.

Edited by Monroe Engel, the book is divided into three parts which read like the components of the ideal English professor: theory, practice and teaching. Unlike the first three volumes in this series that were united by genre, theme and history (*The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice,* edited by Morton Bloomfield, *Twentieth Century Literature in Retrospect,* edited by Reuben Brower and *Veins of Humor,* edited by Harry Levin), this volume is characterized by its rejection of the usual latent assumptions that keep literary criticism afloat, and its serious attention is given to the much ignored assumption—the place of literature in life. According to the editor, all of the essays suggest in some manner "that the vitality of the literary enterprise is related to usability, its capacity to strengthen or alter options." All of the contributors have been actively involved in language development, either as theorists, poets, critics, or teachers, which makes the collection representative, although not definitive, as the volume's working title, *The Uses of Literature in the United States,* would have suggested.

In the theoretical section, the essays range widely in their degree of criticism, from questions that plead for a shift of emphasis within traditional literary practice to radical ones that examine the value of perpetuating academic literary tradition at all. In "Criticism, Consciousness, and the Sources of Life," Allen Grossman charges literary study with the inability "to take its own nature as a subject of rational attention."

> The inner disposition of the literary person is to regard his enterprise as permanently and by its nature exempt from indictment among the forces which are hostile to life, provided only that its practitioners remain disinterested and its practice correct.

Grossman blames the university for destroying vital interconnections between art and criticism by institutionalizing experimental art and thereby anesthetizing it. Unable to fulfill its real goal, to facilitate the effort "to gain knowledge of the sources of life," literature under the aegis of the university

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has lost its force as value and act. When art was ascribed the redemptive qualities once granted by religion, it also acquired the means of social control exercised by religion. For Grossman, the term "aesthetic" has become "the place where the ghostly author and the custodians of art send the reader to lose his purposes, where being loses meaning by becoming beautiful." We are counseled to suspect canon and tradition of "mimetic insufficiency" and to recognize that the proper institution of literature is the culture as a whole.

Grossman has written a perceptive critique of existing literary study, along with a challenging call for a new monomyth about the relation of all persons rejoicing in the truth of communicability. Yet in phrases that describe the study of literature in the mother tongue as "the anarchy of incestuous autonomy" he commits the unintentional irony of exhibiting symptoms of the problem he deplores, "the making of the language of the most intimate relationships an alien thing." Perhaps this language seems particularly abrasive because it has many counterparts in academe and perhaps also because Grossman can occasionally be so stirring, as in his call for poetry to create communities by "pitching persons toward one another full of news."

Criticizing existing courses and methods of literature that are "the product of a humanistic outlook no longer produced by the culture or even by the university," Edward Said suggests that theory should replace the traditional text as the basis of literary study. In his essay "On Originality," Said challenges our convention of retrospective analysis in which we see the writing as already completed and the meaning lost through time or technique. He claims:

> . . . to study literature as given writing, canonized in texts, books, poems, works, dramas . . . is to treat as natural and concrete that which derives from a desire—to write—that is ceaseless, varied, and highly unnatural and abstract, since "to write" is a function never exhausted by the completion of a piece of writing. Thus, only the theoretical interest in the abstract, a general interest in what is permanently knowable, though subject to numerous contingencies, can

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possibly deal with so apparently limitless an original (that is, irreducible) impulse.

Said observes that the originality of contemporary writing rests in its "refusal of originality," in its emphasis on the telling of a story more than the story itself (Borges, Pynchon) and on the rewriting of earlier literature (Joyce, Eliot). His suggestion is intriguing: that literary studies be reoriented away from ideas of lost primacy in the past and toward seeing writing as being produced for a "future formed in the writing." Yet, in determining the unit of study by the circumstances that generated the intention to write, there lurks the possibility of reducing texts into theoretical models.

The essays in the second category, all dealing with American authors—Emerson, Bierce, Howells, Mailer and Hemingway—relate to the theoretical section only in their rejection of pure textual analysis and their attempt to place art in a larger cultural framework. In "The Problem of Emerson," Joel Porte argues that the familiar Emerson of philosophic argument or discursive logic gets in the way of the artist Emerson and that the best guide to the author is his writing, rich in imagination and too often ignored. Porte is convincing and skillful in his analysis of Emerson's "Divinity School Address," as he disproves the work of critics who have labeled Emerson a prophet but denied him the status of an artist.

The case for a neglected Hemingway is presented by Alan Lebowitz, who, predictably, blames this neglect on the New Criticism, which "with its ideals of control and impersonality has been especially harsh on untidy and self-proclaiming writers." Although Lebowitz admits in "No Farewell to Arms" that Hemingway's "ritualistic connection between weaponry and virility" is dangerous, he warns that to misread or deny him is more dangerous, for it deprives us of a "crucial record of ourselves" by a writer who was a "victim of assumptions that go back to our national beginnings." We are asked to confront the author as though he were the embodiment of a national neurosis, but termed our "heritage."

Another confrontation with an author is Gail Thain Parker's essay "Realism and Feminism," which accuses Howells of being, if not a saboteur of the nineteenth-century women's rights movement, at least a declared enemy. For evidence, Parker uses the female characterizations in his novels and for motivation she pleads biography. The second of eight children, sickly, bookish and sheltered, Howells resented having to abandon his sheltered nest for the callousness and corruption of the world, and he hated women for their privileged innocence, for their "never growing up and getting away with it." Howells would help them get enfranchised, but only at the price of the painful initiation into society that he had endured.

The last section of *Uses of Literature* concerns painful initiation as well, but this time for the instructors and students in open admissions schools or community colleges. The essays are about "relevance" and the old unworkable assumptions that linger to haunt the teacher who must grade papers on the *Odyssey* entitled "Telemachus and My Boyfriend." Vacillating between romantic notions of the students—"Did Adam and Eve feel the need to write, to read?" (one is tempted to ask if before or after the Fall)—and even more romantic notions about the power of language studies to free those students, Clara Claiborne Park, Robert Cumming and Adrienne Rich all question their means, goals and very existence in the classroom. Trained to read literature with a proper academic distance, they are faced with students who, being "culturally naïve" according to Park, are vulnerable to the basic emotions and issues expressed by the books—"Who was right about the afterlife, Homer or Dante?" They are wondering whether this may not be a fruitful way of reading, after all. Furthermore, these instructors are finding the world outside the classroom affecting their experiences within the classroom more than they suspect happens in the elite college: Park has discovered that many students feel threatened by their new awareness, because it separates them from their familiar lives and communities without providing new ones; Cumming encounters

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students who not only do not understand words as he does, they do not see them as he does, because their cognitive problems were not corrected in the public schools; Rich's description of the average schedule and surroundings of her students explains her anger at trying "to repair and extend the fabric of language under conditions which tend to coarsen our apprehensions of everything."

While most of the essays throughout the book reject the possibility or the desirability of a neutral, objective view of literature and while they imply that a proper use of language humanizes or liberates, their definition of that use varies. The Hebraic-Hellenic canon, for example, that I. A. Richards in "Literature for the Unlettered" believes could provide "an awareness of human nature deep enough to keep man from wrecking himself," appears too insufficient and exclusive to realize the communities that Allen Grossman envisions for man. With an element of iconoclasm, *Uses of Literature* denounces a host of ailing gods, among them the too-tidy arrangements of literature into genres, canons and classics. Literature about the nature of literature is certainly not novel in our period, where art turns in upon itself endlessly and literary criticism almost invariably becomes a theory about art and life. Yet this new collection of essays on the nature of literature is valuable because it emphasizes that existing literary practice not only betrays the mystery and flux at the core of poetry with the props of habit, but also jealously renders esoteric and professional that which is a source of life for all men.

The claims for poetry that these writers are intent upon asserting remain within that cultural tradition which has regarded the impact of art as oblique: words rarely bring down the rains or topple regimes. Yet behind the statements in *Uses of Literature,* and oddly aligned with the utilitarian bent in the title, there lurks a form of romanticism that believes in the power of language to release man into the present and to guarantee his freedom there. The writers of these essays, despite their differences that reflect the factions in

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academe today, no longer believe that poetry makes nothing happen. Instead, *Uses of Literature* presents, perhaps paradoxically, a restrained romanticism that reasserts the force of our fictions.

A Carnal Time, a Mortal Time

CONJUNCTIONS AND DISJUNCTIONS. *By Octavio Paz. Translated by Helen R. Lane. Viking Press. $7.95.*

Reviewed by HELEN VENDLER

Octavio Paz's successive volumes of essays, as they appear in English translation, have shown us a mind that feeds richly on a multiple past. Paz is Mexico's most famous contemporary poet; he was also, until he resigned in 1968 when the Mexican government used firearms against a student protest, Mexico's ambassador to India. When we look at the world through his eyes, the effort is taxing: Paz lives in a pressure of intersecting cultures which he holds, with constant tension, in a burning focus of inquiry. The Aztecs, Spain of the Golden Age, the surrealists, contemporary Mexico, India—these are the chief recurrent points of reference here, and each implies a different view of the world, men and women, religion, art, and thought. For Paz, each culture actualizes some human possibility of expression and meaning, and in this book of conjunctions and disjunctions he contrasts other cultures with our own to force us into reflections on attitudes which we normally take for granted.

Paz begins with the body, and its indisputable mortality, its excretory and genital functions; what, he asks, have different cultures found as modes of response to that irreducible flesh? Philosophy, whether in the ascetic or in the libertine, intellectualizes and represses spontaneous bodily expression; art, on the other hand, is "a sublimation that seeks to incarnate: to return to the body." All cultures experience a disjunction between the body and whatever is not the body, and to study the fluctuating relation between *body* and *non-body* seems to Paz a way to chart the rise and fall of culture, and to propose relations between them. Not all readers will be convinced by Paz's neo-Spenglerian determinism, nor even by his polarities: "I believe," he says, "that Indian civilization is the other pole of that of the West, the other version of the Indo-European world." Adopting a wide and panoramic view of time and space, he begins the substantive part of his book, the two essays entitled, respectively, "Eve and Prajnaparamita" and "Order and Accident."

In the first, after a comparison of Christian and Buddhist art, Paz continues with a more specialized contrast between Protestantism ("the final and most radical phase of Christian sublimation") and Tantrism ("the last and most extreme expression of the Buddhist 'corporization'"). The descriptive brilliancies in this chapter succeed each other with dazzling rapidity, and Paz takes on the blurred vivacity of a hummingbird. Western readers will find Paz's allusive style difficult to follow as he refers to Tantric ceremonies, myths, texts and terms; and they may agree with Paz when he says that Tantric rites, which include public ritual copulation, cannibalism and ritual murder, are "not only repulsive but sometimes downright criminal." However, the rite "has as its object the attaining of a state of nonduality," where, to use Blake's terms, we have not yet suffered the fall into division; and therefore attempts "by every possible means to radically suppress the differences between the permitted and the forbidden, the agreeable and the filthy, the good and the accursed." The rituals and the mantras of Tantric Buddhism seem to Paz closer to the incarnational wholeness of poetry than Protestantism can be, with its emphasis on clear theological language and moral abstraction. The wandering Tantric mystic "with his tangled hair and his naked body covered with ashes, dances and sings mystic, licentious songs in the temples." Although Paz attempts an even-

HELEN VENDLER is professor of English at Boston University. She is the author of *Yeats's Vision and the Later Plays* and *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems*, and has recently completed a book on George Herbert that will be published next year by the Harvard University Press.

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handed description of the opposing tendencies of Western Protestantism and Tantric Buddhism, he writes with the fervor of an apologist when he espouses the poetic seer over the Christian pastor, "clean-shaven and dressed in black, occupied with philanthropic tasks." But need the poet be either? we ask, remembering at once Christopher Smart on the one hand and George Herbert on the other, and perhaps Keats in between. Are not all possibilities of lived life equally open to poetry?

It is in the final essay, "Order and Accident," that Paz confronts modern society, and laments the absence of a mythological eternal order, in which gods, whether capriciously or solemnly, punished and rewarded men, giving meaning to individual lives. Paz sees the substitution of scientific abstractions for divine figures as a loss, because the axioms do not stand, as the divinities did, in a metaphorical relation to the human. When man's body was conceived of in relation to an assemblage of divinities, those divinities were themselves a projection of something in man—the *non-body* as Paz calls it—that man's own imagination felt called upon to externalize in myth. But the feelings, aspirations and even revulsions projected in the figures of divine persons found less and less scope in the other human repositories for the *non-body*—philosophical idealism, critical reason and materialist scientific abstraction, as Paz names them in historical sequence. The body, says Paz, now finds no language in which sexuality can be in dialogue with the *non-body*. "There is no eroticism without reference to the *non-body*, as there is no religion without reference to the *body*." With the loss of a divine inflexible order comes the revolutionary imperative—that it is up to man to change the world in which he finds himself. The consequence for modern art is that it is "torn between the expression of life, either to celebrate or condemn it, and the reform of life." But Wallace Stevens asks us to reflect whether the expression of life *must* be either a celebration or a condemnation: cannot the poet be simply accurate, bent "not to console/Nor sanctify, but plainly to propound?"

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Coming in Winter . . .

Heinz Hartmann and the Conflict-free Sphere

by

H. Stuart Hughes

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Paz hopes for a "return to being" in the present, rather than a continuation of our forced march into the future, led by the *ignis fatuus* of the idea of progress. "The body has never believed in progress; its religion is not the future but the present." In the prophetic ending to this essay, Paz allows himself the utterance of a personal vision: "I believe that we are entering another time . . . neither linear time nor cyclical time. Neither history nor myth. . . . A carnal time, a mortal time: the present is not unreachable, the present is not forbidden territory." This is the cry of a deprived poet, living, as Arnold said, between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. Paz, because of his stubborn rootedness in the erotic, is more convincing when he prophesies a return of "the human figure, radiant and radiating symbols." Paz's private mosaic of body and spirit, constructed out of so many glittering *tesserae* of allusion, remains an energetic display of individual vision, offered for our ratification as we substitute our own analogies, metaphors and experiences for those Paz draws out of his profound and far-reaching poetic consciousness.

Surrealists and the Theater

THEATRE IN DADA AND SURREALISM. *By J. H. Matthews. Syracuse University Press. $13.*

Reviewed by JON PLAUT

J. H. Matthews, who is professor of French at Syracuse University, deals with two of the most interesting modern forms of artistic expression, dada and surrealism, in a medium in which comparatively little scholarly work in English has been undertaken; but more important is the fact that the title of the book indicates, quite precisely, that what will be treated is theater *within* dada and surrealist expression, and not their influences as they are found in works for the theater. There are both strengths and weaknesses in that distinction.

Professor Matthews's firm resolve to treat only theatrical works within the clear mainstream of dada and surrealism (mostly in France, it turns out) is demonstrated by the choice of authors to head his chapters: Tristan Tzara, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Louis Aragon, André Breton and Phillippe Soupault, Roger Vitrac, Antonin Artaud, Georges Hugnet, Radovan Ivsic, Julien Gracq, Jean-Pierre Duprey, José Pierre, Jean-Jacques Auquier and Alain-Valery Aelberts. This exclusive treatment is further demonstrated by only brief reference to the works of Ionesco, Beckett, Anouilh and Brecht, and to most of Artaud's work. While this limited approach is defended ably by Professor Matthews, it leaves out too much that is relevant, as well as interesting, to the study.

The subject area dealt with by the author, however, is often presented in a witty, frequently brilliant, and always perceptive and interesting narrative of those artists creating a new theater that defied accepted plot and character development in favor of the poetic. These poets, on behalf of protest, antiart, anticulture (dada), automatism and the inner world (surrealism), sought to arouse, antagonize and astound in an entirely separate way from the traditions of theater. In his examination of the texts Matthews presents the plays themselves, and their creators, in an exciting and comprehensive fashion (but one that would benefit from an index for the student and researcher).

Professor Matthews nicely instructs us on Tzara's plasticity in the use of language; on Ribemont-Dessaignes's concept of antigravity and how it applied to *L'Empereur de Chine*; on Aragon's only surface tradition in *Au Pied du Mur*, as compared to what he ably demonstrates to be superficial analysis by Yvette Gindine and Martin Esslin (although Esslin demonstrates a breadth of treatment in his *The Theatre of the Absurd* missing in *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism*); on the discussion of unperformable plays in the chapter on Duprey; and on Hugnet's coherence on the level of

JON PLAUT is a theater and film critic for weekly newspapers in New Jersey and elsewhere. He is a member of the New Jersey Drama Critics Association and is a practicing attorney.

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dream, not reality, and the application of chance. Matthews often relies upon the text of the plays and the comments of the authors to inform us, and we are indebted to his scholarship.

Professor Matthews is especially cogent in his analysis of Aelberts and Auquier's *Cérémonial pour saluer d'Eruption en Eruption jusqu'à l'infracassable Nuit la Brèche absolue et la Trajectorie du Marquis de Sade*. Of particular interest is the discussion of the investment of theatrical arts, such as costume, dance and music into the tableaux. Of less interest, at least to me, was the thesis-ridden chapter about Gracq's search for revelation and the Grail.

Perhaps the finest, and yet the most restricted subject in *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism* is Professor Matthews's treatment of the prime mover: André Breton. An essential member of dada and the mainstay in surrealism, Breton naturally appears throughout the book with his judgments and pronouncements. The manner in which we are made to comprehend Breton's growing doubts about dada and his seeking of the poetic ("images of the marvelous") and automatism, through his own words (in part with Soupault) is instructive. And the image making that concludes Matthews's discussion of their "Vous m'oublierez," which Matthews selects to underline Breton's desertion of dada for surrealism, is an example of clear and brilliant teaching.

Matthews understands well the obvious faults of Breton's relationship to his contemporaries. He reports that Ribemont-Dessaignes may have had Breton in mind when creating Riquet (a pompous character in *Le Serin meut*), and that characterization is supported by Breton's words, "We must undoubtedly establish another order." (Why, "undoubtedly?" Is the word any more than a pompous flourish?)

But Professor Matthews generally follows Breton's judgment about when to cease looking upon works as either dadaist or surrealist. Matthews adopts, with a labored, and finally unconvincing argument, for Tzara the supposedly damning rationale that the increase in theatrical skill observable in *Mouchoir de Nuages* "must be credited less to the demands of dada than to Tzara's infidelity to these." No such argument is presented in the case of surrealism and the even more theatrical *"Cérémonial pour . . . de Sade"* (and none should be). Even in Professor Matthews's scholarly study, then, it appears that Breton's judgments control.

Where Tzara's output did become of rapidly declining interest, however, Artaud's did not. In Matthews's own words:

> On the face of it, then, the surrealists had only themselves to blame for not appreciating the possible benefit to their movement of active cooperation with Artaud. From one important point of view, however, they had good reasons for withholding their support. From the surrealists' standpoint Artaud and Vitrac appeared altogether too inclined to pursue in the theatre alone their effort to attain those ambitions that they had in common with surrealism.

As Matthews reports, eventually even Breton felt his reservations about Artaud "less abruptly." But Matthews avoids (unwisely, I think) analyzing "impure" theater material by Artaud (which represents most of his work).

To conclude, though, as positively as the spell cast by these audacious men of dada and surrealism, I would requote a few of the marvelous opening lines that Professor Matthews selects for his chapter headings. They perhaps best set forth the provocation and dynamism of the poets included in *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism*:

"Nothing is more enjoyable than baffling people."

—Tristan Tzara

"Don't go to the theatre. Go to bed."

—Roger Vitrac

"We spend our lives on the lookout for adventure. No. Not adventure, no. Surprise, yes, surprise."

—Georges Hugnet

"It's going to begin. I'm not obliged to explain everything to you."

—Radovan Ivsic

"To renew fire. To provoke, salute the raw event—the plan par excellence of the theatre. At the root of everything that gives us a reason to live."

—Alain-Valery Aelberts and Jean-Jacques Auquier

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1811 Q Street, N W, Washington, D. C. 20009. Because of space limitations we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*
—EDITOR

I had hoped that Peter Gay was one of the preliminary readers who had "passed" my Spring 1974 article, "The Tragic Dilemma of Modern Art," but this was obviously not the case (his letter, Summer 1974). Professor Gay's speculations to the contrary, Mr. Haydn and I had an intermittent, considerate, professional correspondence about another piece and this over a period of several years. I think, at one point, Mr. Haydn had plans to print the article back-to-back with another view. I am very appreciative of having had the opportunity to publish the article in the SCHOLAR.

Professor Gay apparently reads the article as some kind of cruel, mindless travesty that is aimed at individuals. It speaks for itself, of course, and is nothing of the sort. Also, the section on German culture is a major part of the article, but not the whole.

I know from Professor Gay's *Weimar Culture* that he and I approach this subject from radically different perspectives, that I make correspondences and draw inferences that are not a part of his culture or experience. It is impossible for me not to connect the Bauhaus to this century's ongoing experience of "totalitarianism." However enthusiastic and humane the intentions of Bauhaus teachers and students, the revolution they proposed and popularized was one of design, planning, publicity and conditioning. I have worked in the designed, windowless, fluorescent-lit, air-conditioned cores of contemporary office buildings built in the Bauhaus image and style in New York City—in calculated corporate-image environments of controlled modern spareness, where modern architectural and design ideals are used as literal signs of efficient management and power. In my meaning "totalitarianism" is a comprehensive name for the processes and effects of environmental and people control that advertisers and propagandists have obviously exploited, that twentieth-century artists and intellectuals have experimented with, that Hitler most ferociously means, that the Walt Disney parks and organization express, that the Nixon administration's public relations policies both exploited and tried to impose, and that live color television coverage of the shooting and burning in Los Angeles perhaps incarnates. I think that particularized "wild connections" like these are relatively commonplace today, and are indispensable if we are to realize the totality and the pity of a predicament that we all share.

In the same personalized vein, and in the sense of the entire article, I think it is impossible today to make easy syntheses and meanings out of the cultural emigration from the Nazi holocaust. The quotations referring to the *émigrés* that agitate Professor Gay are taken from the closing page of the article. They supplement a brief description of the phenomenon of cultural emigration as it started to recur in the New York art world in the late 1960s. (When the Vietnam War disappeared, the talk about emigration and evacuation from a dead "scene" quieted.) They depend, for any sense they are to have, on the long sections of the essay that precede them in which I tried to establish the connections between the high culture's ambivalences and priorities, and the low, real implementations of them that have caused so much suffering in this century.

Professor Gay's vehement impressions again to the contrary, I have tried very hard not to be mindless about the difficult, volatile subjects of the article. I think that there is a side issue of the thirties' cultural emigrations of "scenes" closed down and "scenes" reopened that is significant, and that the process was sometimes exploitative and "sordid"; and (this is harsh) Dietrich Bonhoeffer did not go to Hollywood. I closed the article with my im-

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plicit desire to end the whole scene of romantic restlessness and exploitation. I do not think that I am alone in having realized that it has done a lot of harm.

WILHELMINA VAN NESS
New York, New York

* * *

Actually, this letter was composed, in thought and spirit, some twenty-four months ago. It was then, in the library, that I became acquainted with the SCHOLAR. After reading the issue through, without pause, only two tasks remained. One, to record its address and the other to obtain a subscription.

Two years and eight additional issues have only deepened my appreciation for this uniquely literate publication and the contributions of its remarkable former editor, the late Hiram Haydn.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR represents, for me anyway, what Whitehead called "the habitual vision of greatness" so vital in a time marked by mistrust and pseudovalues.

CHARLES KIROUSIS
Petersham, Massachusetts

* * *

While I was moved and pleased to read the tributes to my father published in the Summer 1974 AMERICAN SCHOLAR, I was surprised that there was only one tribute from a woman, for my father edited the works of many formidable women and was friends with some of the women who have had enormous intellectual impact on our culture. I think of Hannah Arendt, Paule Marshall, Anaïs Nin, Alice Walker and Martha Graham to mention only a few.

But it is more than that, for women have something very special to say about my father because he respected the intellectual integrity of women in a way that very few men seem able to. My sister and I were in a unique position to understand that. At a time when many women are blaming men for all their problems, it would seem fitting to say a word or two about one man who, whatever else, consistently treated women as equals and human beings.

I was not aware, while we were growing up, of how unusual our situation was. The women's liberation movement was well under way before I understood the kind of struggles many women go through just in order to *want* to do something. We were all always expected to do something; we were, after all, Hiram Haydn's children. If my father did not always present the world we would have to confront to us realistically, he always gave us the courage and ambition to face it when we got to it. No less true for the girls than for the boys. If any of us had an idea, we could count on our father listening to us and at least trying to understand what we had to say. I can be sure of that, for I brought home some of the most extreme.

I was the oldest, and so I was perhaps listened to even more zealously than the others. When my father got his Ph.D., he made one for me on the yellow paper that he always wrote on and placed it in the mailbox. I think that I was under the impression for five years at least that I really had my Ph.D. When I was ten, he had my first novel privately printed. When I was thirteen, my play was produced, at our house, with a professional casting director.

He was an extremist, and I inherited his temperament, but I literally do not remember him ever suggesting that I should not do something because I was a girl, whether I was playing baseball, or in the trees, or going off to political meetings.

In addition, I think that he contributed probably much more than he knew to my being what was once called a civil rights activist although he trembled, as fathers often do, once I was one. I was not ever presented with *any* ideas about race when I was a child, which is a tribute to my family generally. Therefore I moved more freely than many white people can when it came time to move.

In short, my father did a lot for women in general, not by making statements about our rights or our talents, but by accepting us. He did a lot for me and my sister in particular.

The Afrikans believe in continuity beyond death as opposed to the more static concept of a life after death. They believe that all human beings are forces and that our ancestors are still with us. I know that my father is still with us, and it is an honor to be his daughter.

MARY H. WEBB
Gainesville, Florida

* * *

Regarding Charles R. Larson's review of Joseph Blotner's biography of Faulkner (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Summer 1974): Eula Var-

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ner Snopes's tombstone is inscribed with a paraphrase from Proverbs 31 beginning "A woman of valor. . . ." So with the citation on Sallie Murray Faulkner's grave. Faulkner knows his Bible far better than Larson, and his "ancestral sources" are more ancient than suggested in the review. He drew on his heritage in a way in which professors of literature should.

WILLIAM CUTTER
Hebrew Union College
Los Angeles, California

MR. LARSON replies: My illustration (the inscription on Sallie Murray Faulkner's gravestone) was given for the same reason that Professor Blotner gave it—to show how Faulkner incorporated bits and pieces of family history into his writing—not to illustrate Faulkner's knowledge of the Bible, or my lack of knowledge of the Bible, since neither of those have ever been disputed.

* * *

May I commend THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR for its efforts to come to terms with university publishing in the Summer 1974 issue and at the same time argue with Daniel Hoffman's call for university presses to publish more poetry? It seems to me any press that wants to publish poetry should do so, but not because, as Mr. Hoffman suggests, "the health of our literary culture is in jeopardy."

There are uncountable outlets for the publication of poetry: journals, small presses, university presses, trade houses, et cetera. Poetry is the easiest and cheapest material for private publication. Anyone or any group can issue a new poetry journal. A Berkeley poet tells me there have been some two hundred poetry publications in the Bay Area alone in recent years.

The widely heard lament for the lack of outlets for poetry is, I suspect, distress at the lack of readership, or the infrequence of acclaim and esteem, in disguise. In this, poets share the fate of scholars: enormous and admirable intellectual effort often commands a pathetically small readership. This does not lead me to conclude with John Blum that we have a case of overpublishing (of books he admits he hasn't read); our nation surely has greater sins than too much thinking and writing. But American poets and scholars probably do have more avenues of publication available today than ever before. There are just more creative and educated people competing for attention.

WILLIAM J. MCCLUNG
Sponsoring Editor
University of California Press
Berkeley, California

* * *

In her comments on books published by university presses in the Summer 1974 issue of the SCHOLAR, Miss Nancy Wilson Ross deprecates the printing of James A. Garfield's diary. She perhaps was thinking of President Garfield's brief six months in the White House. But it should be recalled that Garfield stood near the center of American affairs, as an educator, Civil War general, congressman and senator, for a generation before he was elected to the presidency. He was a man of learning, culture and sensitivity, whose comments on the America of the mid-nineteenth century are perceptive and cogent. It would not be wrong to assert that his diary is among the most valuable personal records we have from the nineteenth century. Readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR should not be misled by Miss Ross's careless evaluation; the diary is excellent reading, both instructive and entertaining. Michigan State University Press is to be commended for its service to the cause of history.

ROLAND V. LAYTON, JR.
Hiram, Ohio

* * *

I wonder if I may be extended the courtesy of your columns to add a footnote to the interesting essay by Roger Sale published in your Winter 1973–74 issue.

Your readers may be interested to know that the Southern Illinois University Press has just started publishing a series entitled Lost American Fiction in which we hope to reprint novels which, for the reasons described so well by Mr. Sale, have dropped out of print.

We are limiting ourselves for the moment to the period 1910 to 1941. By November 1974 we will have published the first six titles in the series, all of which are listed in our fall-winter 1974/75 catalogue.

VERNON STERNBERG
Director
Southern Illinois University Press

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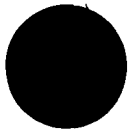

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